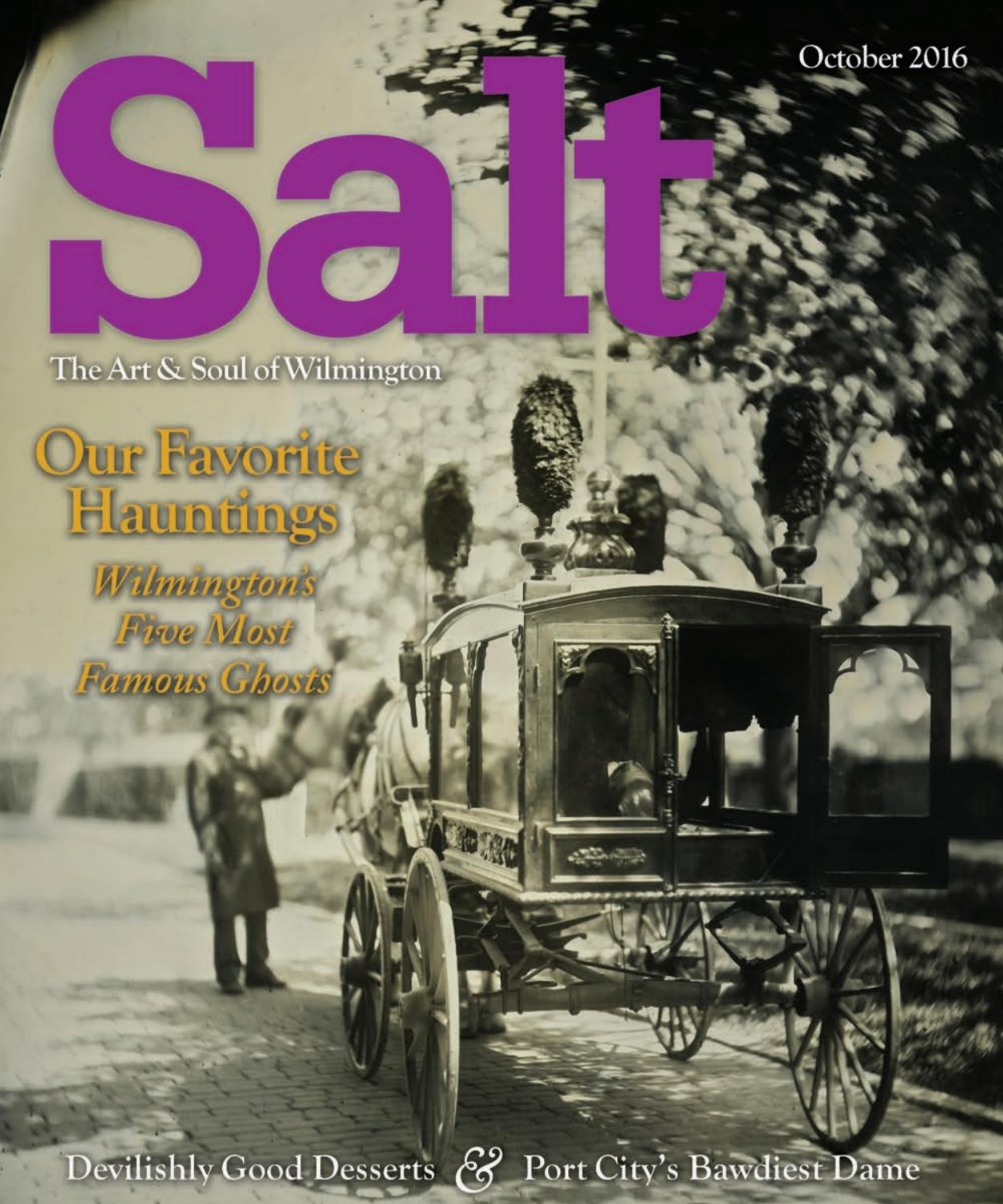
October 2016

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

Our Favorite Hauntings

Wilmington's Five Most Famous Ghosts



Devilishly Good Desserts & Port City's Bawdiest Dame

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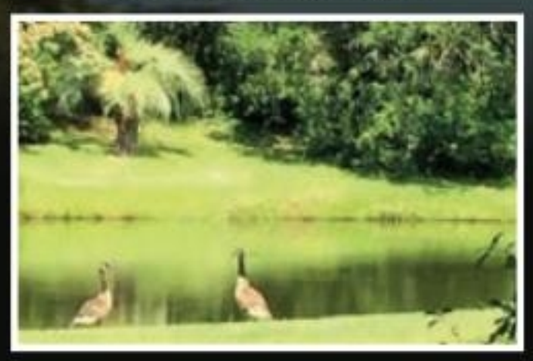

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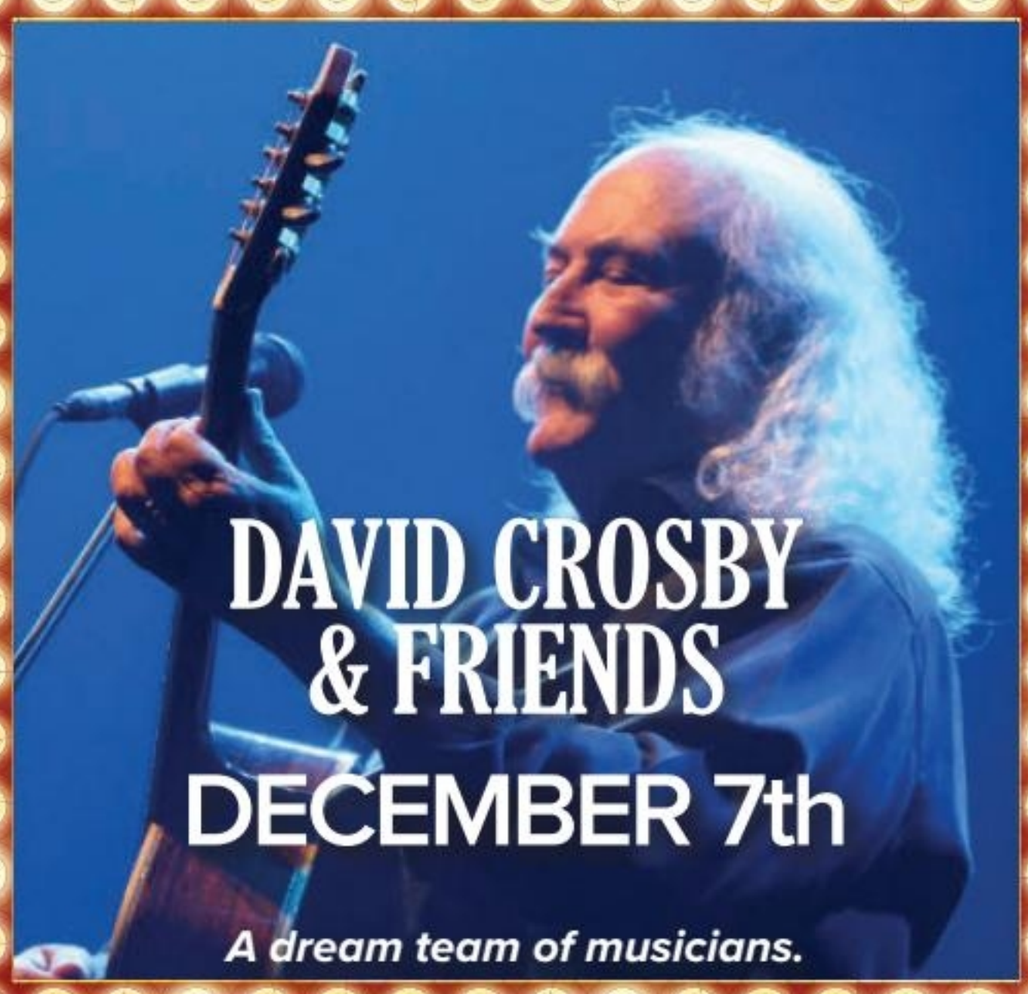

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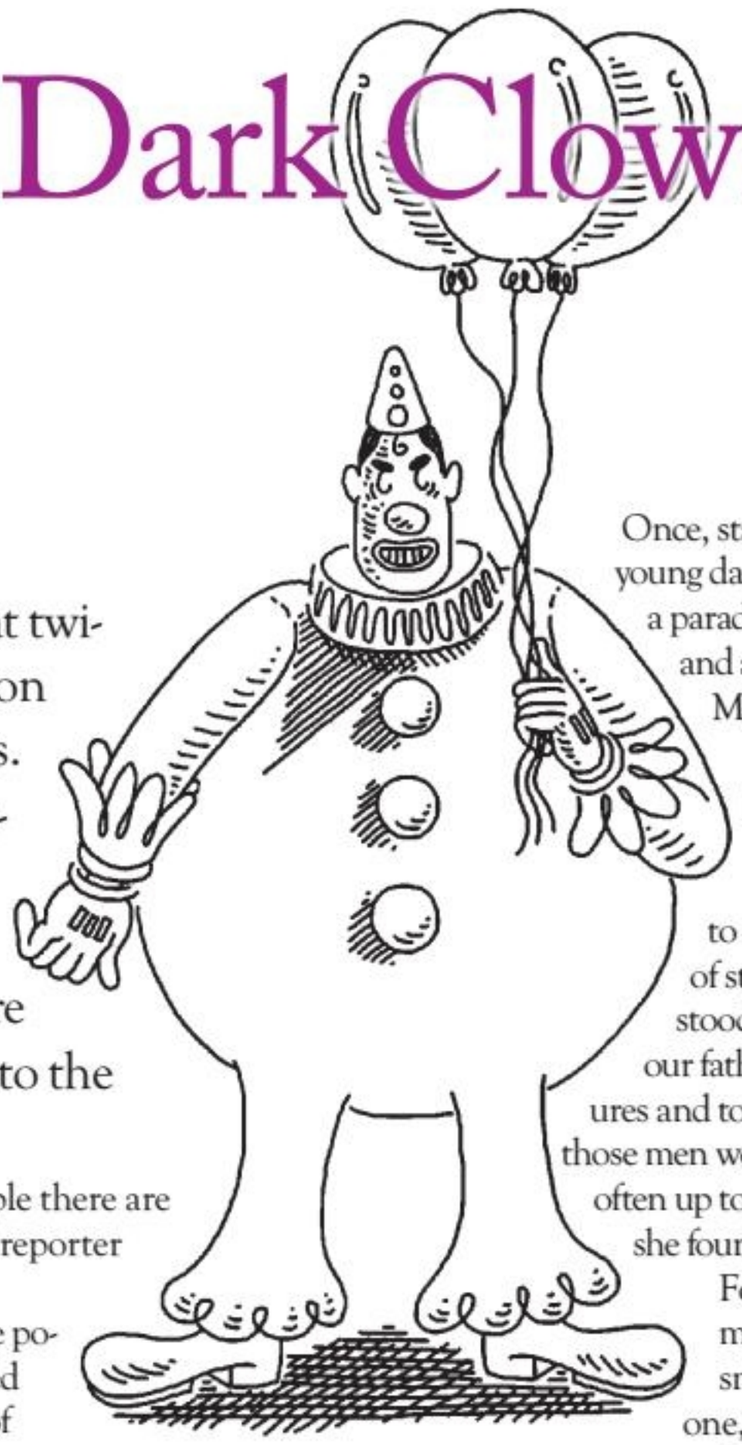
Dark Clowns



By Jim Dodson

I was deep in the country at twilight, heading home with the radio on when I heard about the dark clowns. The BBC presenter sounded skeptical, even amused by reports out of Greenville, South Carolina, where people dressed as clowns were reportedly trying to lure children into the woods with candy and money.

"So . . . is this just a hoax or something people there are really concerned about?" the host asked a local reporter covering the story, his tongue half in cheek.

"I can't say it's a hoax," she replied, "because the police are taking this very seriously. They have warned parents and doubled patrols. This really has a lot of people freaked out."

So-called "after-dark clowns" have been spooking America quite a bit lately, it turns out, most recently in Winston-Salem and Green Bay, Wisconsin, where a photograph of a dark clown roaming early morning streets carrying black balloons set the internet on fire. Two Octobers ago residents of Bakersfield, California, were spooked by photographs of "evil after-dark clowns" roaming their streets after hours, showing up under lampposts and frequenting kiddie rides. Since then, reports of dark clowns have cropped up in a dozen other places around the country.

"The police don't know whether the stories are coming from the imaginations of children or something sinister is afoot, but panicked residents seem to be taking the law into their own hands," *The New York Times* noted about this latest outbreak of clowns in South Carolina, adding that shots had been fired into wooded areas where the sightings occurred.

Whatever else may be true, clowns occupy a peculiar space in American popular culture, somewhere between what's perfectly innocent and downright terrifying. My September issue of *Smithsonian* notes that clowns have been with us since man's earliest days in the guise of everything from mythologized tricksters to painted medicine men. Pygmy clowns entertained bored Egyptian pharaohs, and medieval court jesters were entitled to thumb their oversized noses at the king without fear of losing their heads. Ancient Rome had professional clowns whose job it was to pacify unruly crowds at festivals, peacekeepers who kept an eye out for troublemakers. "Well into the 18th and 19th century," writes *Smithsonian's* Linda Rodriguez McRobbie, "the prevailing clown figure of Western Europe and Britain was the pantomime clown, who was sort of a bumbling buffoon."

Once, standing in a crowd of camera-wielding tourists next to my young daughter on the main drag in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, awaiting a parade of local rodeo riders, I spotted a mime working the crowd and approaching us.

My daughter was delighted. But I wasn't.

Mimes have always made me uncomfortable, a modest phobia I trace to a powerful moment in my early childhood in Mississippi, where my father briefly owned a small newspaper. One evening in the late fall he took my brother and me to a political rally in a cornfield just outside town where a group of strange people showed up wearing white robes and hoods and stood around a bonfire. We didn't stay long, just long enough for our father to get a quote or two from the mayor and the hooded figures and to frighten the bug juice out of his sons. We asked our dad why those men wore hoods. "Because people who wear masks are weak people often up to no good," he replied. Our mother gave him holy hell when she found out where he'd taken us just to harvest a quote.

Forty years later, picking up on my post-Klan jitters, the mime paused right in front of us and attempted to make me smile. He made a huge happy face followed by a tragic sad one, rubbing away imaginary tears when I wouldn't yield. The crowd ate it up.

"Thanks," I said through gritted teeth. "Feel free to move along now."

Clowns were everywhere in the America where I grew up. Most were fun-loving and perfectly innocent in those faraway days — Clarabell the Clown on *Howdy Doody* and Bozo the Clown with his internationally syndicated show — which according to *Smithsonian* had a 10-year waiting list for tickets.

There was even a clown I liked on my favorite weeknight TV show, Red Skelton's alter ego Clem Kadiddlehopper, a bumbling painted-up fool who was tolerable only because he often broke up halfway through his skits. In my bedroom I even had a harlequin desk lamp. I attended Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus about that time, exactly once, on the other hand, feeling bad for the animals and truly bothered by the clowns. Only the acrobats appealed to me.

"So the question is," *Smithsonian*'s McRobbie wonders, "when did the clown, supposedly a jolly figure of innocuous, kid-friendly entertainment, become so weighed down by fear and sadness? When did clowns become so dark?"

The truest answer is, long ago and far away.

Classical operas and Shakespearean dramas, after all, have long used clown figures as sinister messengers of mystery and intrigue. But in the modern American context it may well have been an evil clown named Pogo who established the motif of the dark clown around town.

His real name was John Wayne Gacy Jr., a friendly chap who entertained children in the Chicago suburbs for years during the middle 1970s before he was arrested, tried and convicted of killing 33 young men. "You know," he reportedly told investigators, "a clown can get away with murder." Before Gacy faced execution in 1994, America's Crown Prince of Killer Clowns spent his time in his cell

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

painting pictures of clowns and self-portraits of himself as Pogo the clown.

After seven years of writing about dark things for my magazine in Atlanta, I officially swore off watching horror films after writing a piece for *Boston* magazine about a reclusive teen in western Massachusetts whose mother allowed her son to gorge himself on the *Friday the 13th* films only to have her troubled son don a hockey mask one Halloween night and slash several kids before hanging himself in the woods. The psychologist who'd been treating him for years told me "his identification with Jason seemed pretty harmless."

A toxic flood of even more ghastly films continues to flow into your local Cineplex, feeding our insatiable desire to terrify ourselves. Heath Ledger's brilliant if disquieting Joker in the 2008 Batman remake *The Dark Knight* seemed almost too real and sadly prefigured the gifted actor's own demons rising to the surface when he shortly died of an accidental drug and alcohol overdose.

I sometimes wonder if we aren't simply hardwired to value a good harmless scare in a world that appears damaged beyond repair and full of very real dangers, providing new purpose to whatever bogeyman has always lurked beneath the bed. In another age, after all, fairy tales and fables of trolls loitering beneath bridges and witches in the woods were meant to instruct children on the dangers of straying too far beyond the light or down a road of ruin, real or imagined. "Always keep a-hold of Nurse," goes a famous ditty by a French writer, Hilaire Belloc, "for fear of finding something worse."

Once upon a time, Madge the beautician and Speedy Alka-Seltzer were icons of commercial television spots. They've given way to pharmaceutical companies peddling expensive drugs for maladies whose side effects may kill you, security firms eager to surveil your home against intruders who are just waiting to pounce, identity theft, and internet investment firms that torched your 401-K plan a few years back while reminding you that you haven't put aside nearly enough for a "happy" retirement.

Perhaps this explains why Americans can't seem to get enough of Halloween's faux gore and fright wigs, projected to shell out a record $7 billion or $75 per ghoul among those celebrating the holiday this year — rivaling Christmas retail.

It's all part of the funhouse ride that thankfully isn't real, and every town larger than the hips on a snake seems eager to cash in on the phenomenon with its own haunted corn maze or woods of terror peopled by chain saw-wielding psychos and evil clowns, bless their dark little hearts.

In a broader context, all our lives are challenged by Dark Clowns of one kind or another and things that go bump in the night — a sick child, a worrying diagnosis, a lost job. The worry list is endless.

Maybe the way to fight back is to simply make light of such darkness the way John Candy did in the 1989 John Hughes' classic *Uncle Buck*. In one of my favorite scenes in the movie, a drunken clown shows up to entertain at a children's birthday party where Uncle Buck Russell, good-natured loser — played to perfection by the late great Candy — is babysitting his nephew and two nieces. Upon discovering that the clown is drunk from an all-night bachelorette party, Uncle Buck suggests the clown's behavior is inappropriate for children. Offended, the clown snarls, "In the field of local live home entertainment, I'm a god." At which Uncle Buck points to the clown's rodent-eared VW and firmly says, "Get in your mouse and get out of here," and proceeds to flattens the clown's big fat rubber nose to drive home the point.

According to *Smithsonian*, only 2 percent of grown-ups suffer from excessive fear of clowns, technically a phobia called coulrophobia.

But don't try telling that to the anxious parents of Green Bay, Bakersfield and Greenville anytime soon.

Truthfully, I'm more worried about some of the dark clowns we'll have to decide between in the voting booth a few days after Halloween. Bottom line, if a dark clown is foolish enough to show up at my door on Halloween night, don't be surprised if I give him a shot of John Candy to remember me by.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater

Orange you glad? Locals know it's October by the Christo and Jeanne-Claude-like transformation of the church at the corner of College and Peachtree. A pumpkin paradise. A wash of orange. The churchyard stays stocked all month. Stop by to snap a photo with the mounds of bounty or load up your wheelbarrow. What many may not realize is the purchase of these pumpkins supports the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation in New Mexico that grows these non-GMO, sustainable orbs, plus a laundry list of youth ministry and mission projects. Recently, the Pumpkin Patch provided bicycles for local foster kids, repaired the homes of flood victims in West Virginia, and sponsored job training for orphans in Malawi through ZOE Ministry. These orange globes may soon be carved into scary faces, but their hearts are in the right place. Info: The Pumpkin Patch, Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, 1401 South College Road, open daily from 9 a.m. – 7 p.m., Monday–Saturday, 12 p.m. – 7 p.m. Sunday. Pumpkins start at 50 cents. www.pumpkinsusa.com

Let It All Hang Out

The annual Riverfest blankets our historic downtown the first weekend in October. We don't do a lot of river worship or water sports; in fact, it's all about fried Oreos, medieval-size turkey legs and classic cars. Like the song that never ends, we don't know how it got started or what it's all about, but we enjoy singing it year after year. Local and commercial vendors set up gooey treats, beer gardens and arts and craft booths for sampling and shopping. In addition to a weekend of free concerts and Saturday night fireworks, the festival brings us something new to celebrate, a Miss Riverfest. The inaugural title is held by Miss Felicia Jones, a UNC Wilmington senior majoring in criminal justice. So, act right y'all! Info: Admission is free for the three-day festival in downtown Wilmington, beginning Oct. 7 with a concert at 6 p.m., all day festivities Oct. 8 and 9, beginning at noon. Details at www.wilmingtonriverfest.com

Devil Went Down to Wilmington

On the way to Georgia, the devilishly talented Charlie Daniels Band stops off in Thalian Hall to celebrate Charlie's 80th birthday with a concert. The North Carolina boy who came to life in our fair city and hails from the pines made good, winning both Dove awards for gospel and CMA awards for country music. The Southern rock of Charlie Daniels is indisputably valuable to our musical landscape. Ain't it nice we can claim him? Info: Oct. 22, 7:30 p.m., tickets: $125, available at www.thalianhall.org

Flour Power

Design may be the intersection of industry and the arts, which can tell us a heck of a lot about the values and aspirations of a society. In the Cameron Art Museum's new exhibit, "Art from Flour: Barrel to Bag," the history of flour as fuel and a vehicle for visual language is sieved through. The Great Depression left many without clothes, giving rise to purposefully patterned flour sacks to be sewn into garments — an early example of targeted marketing. The rise of advertising paralleled the rise of industry in the once prominent and competitive field of 19th and 20th century gristmills. Competitors like King Arthur Flour and Pillsbury offer a window into the frontier of logos, branding and marketing. Design geeks and history buffs alike will find this exhibit Poppin' Fresh. Info: Exhibit runs Oct. 8 – February 12, Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Call (910) 395-5999 or visit www.cameronartmuseum.org

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN NEWLAND

Dead Men Do Tell Tales

The final resting place of many a key player in the Civil War, Oakdale Cemetery is the oldest rural cemetery of its kind. Historian and steward Ken Newland leads a tour about history, service and sacrifice through the premier Confederate cemetery. The Union soldiers were buried in the nearby National Cemetery on Market Street. Highlights of this walking tour include no less than five Confederate generals, an intrepid lady spy, a famous sea captain, and the widow who started the United Daughters of the Confederacy in North Carolina. No need to fear, this tour takes place in the safe cloak of daylight. Info: Oct. 16, 2–4 p.m. Admission is free for Friends of Oakdale members and $10 for non-members. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North 15th St., Wilmington.

Ye Highland Roots

Lads and lasses of Scottish heritage or simply fans of "Outlander," come one, come all. Learn the history and heritage of the Scottish Highlanders who settled North Carolina's Cape Fear region beginning in 1739 with the Argyll colony. This new festival includes living history re-enactments, Celtic music, genealogy talks and whiskey tastings. If those don't interest you, perhaps the Sir Scott Games, a fiddling competition, or the main musical act "Enter the Haggis" will. Eighteenth century dress encouraged. Come for the day or tow your RV or rent a cabin to stay the weekend. Info: Carolina Caledonian Fest, Lu Mil Vineyard, Dublin, N.C., Oct. 28–30. Advance tickets: Adult $10 per day, $17 for two-day pass, $2 for children ages 5–12. Full schedule and details online at www.caledonianfest.com

Piney Flames

Stop. Put the phone down. This is a *controlled* burn. And not like when you leave your toast in the toaster too long and have to pretend you like it that way. This burn is both controlled and essential to the health of our pine ecosystem. Come learn why! Hayrides, raptors and food trucks are not essential to our ecosystem, but they sure do make it enjoyable. Info: Fire in the Pines Festival, Saturday, Oct. 8, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th St., Wilmington. Admission is free.

FIRE IN THE PINES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY KENNISON

Someone's in the Kitchen with Dinah…

I spy with my little eye . . . an open back door . . . to someone's kitchen. Look at the streams of looky-loos! Practically nothing is more fun than snooping around a fabulous historic home and on the 11th annual Back Door Kitchen Tour, they actually invite you to! From mansions to cottages, peek inside the hearts of nine historic homes — the kitchens. Proceeds support beautification, historic preservation, and improvement projects by tour hosts, the residents of Old Wilmington. Info: 11th annual Back Door Kitchen Tour, Saturday, Oct. 15, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., rain or shine. Admission is $25 in advance, $30 the day of the tour. Tickets available online at www.rowilmington.org through Paypal or at Finkelstein's, the Ivy Cottages, and participating Harris Teeter stores. Call 919-522-0600 with questions.

Get Deco'd Out

Gatsby-old-pal, fetch me a glass of giggle water. This town sure does love its flappers. If you missed your chance at a hotsy-totsy or a fine tomato last month, shrug it off, old pal, the Deco Ball shines on. Perhaps you've amassed a wardrobe of drop-waists, wingtips and turbans that need to be shown off more than once a year. Maybe you've got a flapper soul just dying to Lindy hop her way out, or the fancy foxes in Woody Allen's *Cafe Society* got your engine running like a Ford Model T. Any reason is a good one to liberate yourself like it's the 1920s with live jazz, Prohibition-era cocktails, portrait sketches and tarot readings. Info: The Deco Ball/sixth annual Gatsby Gala presented by Kusek Financial Group and hosted by Jess James. Thursday, Oct. 13, VIP cocktail hour: 6–7 p.m., Deco Ball: 7–10 p.m. Wrightsville Manor, 1952 Allens Lane, Wilmington. Tickets: $60 (VIP: $100). Visit stylegirljessjames.com to purchase.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BELLA ROSE, STYLED BY JESS JAMES, MAKEUP BY

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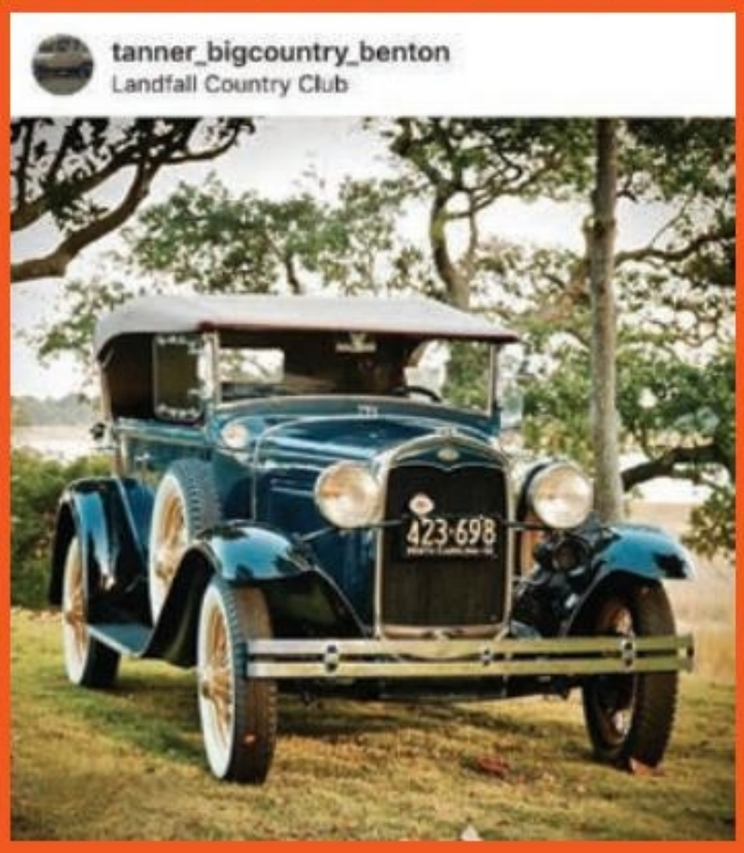

OUR NOVEMBER INSTAGRAM CONTEST THEME:

"Fall"

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Tao Te Chihuahua

By Isabel Zermani

Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles and the water is clear? – Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

Many Octobers ago, another romance fizzled to a close like so many tiki torches at summer's end. Cool weather returned with an aura of realism and slightly better judgment. We said we'd keep in touch as he left town, but we were poorly matched. He had only been a man-sized Band-Aid to the unease with life I felt.

I had started to take a walk every day at 4 p.m. when the ideas and desires of the day blazed too hot and needed the cooling balance of tracing downtown's labyrinth, step by step. My strides redirected furious thought streams that log-jammed my mind. Proper meditation felt out of reach, but walking, I could do.

Somewhat alleviated by the day's walk, the malaise remained. I still thought I needed a man. Which was *true*. I just didn't know he was going to come in dog form.

Back at my cottage that afternoon, a visitor had arrived — traversing two sets of stairs — to my porch. I'd been chosen. A scrappy little sandy-colored creature batted his glassy, faraway eyes at me. Flies encircled him. Fleas sprung off him like a burning sparkler. Water interested him. Veggie sausage did not. I tied a long line of gift ribbon from his collar to the railing so he could have his freedom, but stay hitched while I made a run for a hamburger and flea shampoo.

He had a collar with a rabies vaccination tag from Floyd County, Georgia. He was thin and chomped mosquitoes mid-air. Patches of hair were missing. His belly was covered in a black tar as if he'd ridden the rails as far as they would go and wound up here. I called my little vagrant "Flop," because like other men, he was temporary.

I spent the next few days on the phone, tracking. Floyd County Animal Hospital. The registered owner's number.

Registered owner: "I don't know nothin' about no dog."

Me: "Oh. He's registered to you."

Registered owner: "Wait. . . It's coming back to me." It was his *sister's* dog.

The sister (in a breathy voice): "Well. . . you see. . . it's not *my* dog. It's my *husband's* dog but he has a heart condition/can't take care of a dog/let me get back to you/you sound like a real nice girl."

How did this 11-pound dog end up 500 miles away in Wilmington? How long had he lived on the streets? No one knew. I did learn he earned the name "Trouble" for taking on an adult beaver. He also fathered a litter of pups. I called him by his old name, but he didn't respond. I think he was ready for a change. A permanent one.

The sister (distracted as if she had something in the oven, someone at the door, hot rollers in her hair and the roof on fire): "I just think the dog's *better off* with you." Click.

I called the Band-Aid man to tell him about my new dog. He was watching a documentary on Elvis and joked he'd probably end up like that. I hurried off the phone. When people tell you who they are, listen.

"Napoleon," the name he earned — both for the complex and his regal nature — became my man. Devoted to me alone, we did life together. Eating, sleeping, walking. He taught me the Zen of life, doing one thing at a time. His coat filled in and so did the emptiness I felt. He sensed well-meaning people and alerted me to the subversive by widening his eyes or launching into a full-on snarling attack. His theater, a threat only to the senses, was effective; he respected his independence and proclaimed you should, too. Fear of asserting myself had, at times, paralyzed me. Fear of being alone, fear of the unknown; those are the redwoods in my 4 p.m. logjam. And here is this little dog, absurdly unequipped for this world, living moment by moment, transcending fear and unapologetically trusting his senses.

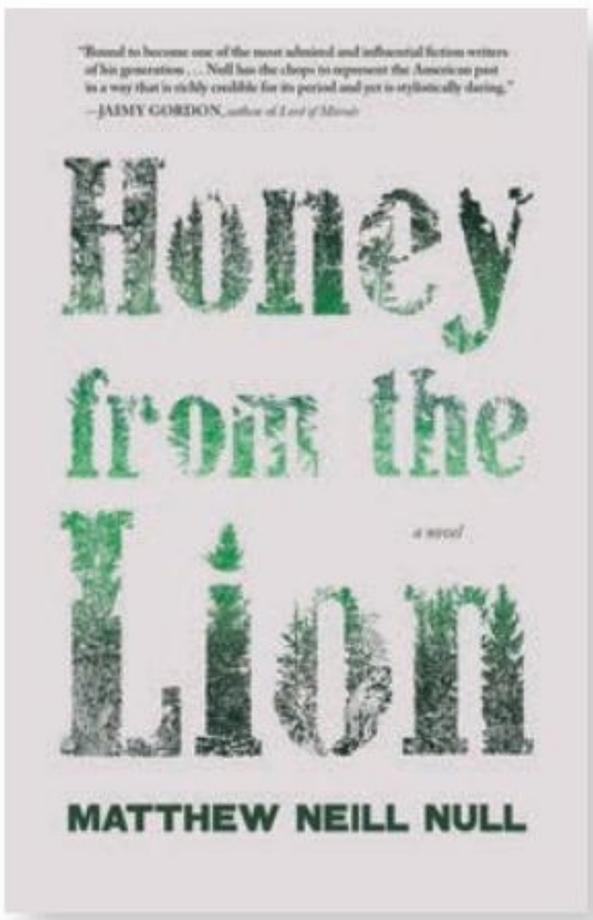
A year later, after much patience and wisdom gained, I met a man. (After you let go of wanting something is usually just when it will arrive.) I worried how Napoleon, normally gun-shy and bitey, might respond when the man arrived for our first date. The two paid mutual respects and just like that, approval was granted. We walked down to the river at dusk for orange sorbet, all three of us, forming the merry band we would become.

Isabel Zermani, our senior editor, prefers the storied life.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISABEL ZERMANI

On the Lookout

A fascinating first novel, a talk of ecological disaster


"Bound to become one of the most admired and influential fiction writers of his generation . . . Null has the chops to represent the American past in a way that is richly credible for its period and yet is stylistically daring."
—JAIMY GORDON, author of Lord of Misrule
Honey
from the
Lion
a novel
MATTHEW NEILL NULL

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Upstairs in the UNC Wilmington Creative Writing Department is the publishing laboratory, where the literary magazine *Ecotone* matured, a small press, Lookout Books, refines their books into existence like a oyster begetting a pearl. Until recently, Lookout's carefully curated and award-winning catalog included two collections of short fiction, a memoir and even a book of poetry, but no novel. But now, Lookout and writer Matthew Neill Null have both dipped their proverbial toes in the water of novel-writing by debuting their first novel, *Honey From The Lion*, last year.

In the book, set in and around a logging camp in West Virginia at the turn of the 20th century, Null brings us characters that many people would cross the street to avoid. He slowly pulls back the curtains and, with a flickering gaslight, breathes life into these unwashed, violent and desperate people who then become the source of great empathy.

Honey From The Lion is not a hymn to strong men who control other people's destinies, though the first chapter and the title (an allusion to Sampson from the Bible) might hint at that. For Null, the real story is the struggle of the hundreds of working men to realize their own destinies within their private lives and a system with the singular purpose of exploitation of resources — natural and human. He takes a microscope to look as closely as possible at individuals who, in most circumstances, would never be anything more than statistics: ledger columns, payroll, accident reports. These moments, teasing out the backstories of each character, no matter how minor, are reminiscent of David Foster Wallace.

Echoes of Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* reverberate as well. The introduction and development of the uber macho world are built around a strict code and the appearance of outsiders unprepared to understand the code. But where McMurtry's men have developed their own code and live outside the dictates of a world they reject, Null's are trapped inside the code as the least powerful players in their ecosystem.

The care and adoration lavished on a Lookout book is obvious. The physical product is a beauty to behold in an age where book design and production are sidelined for bargain prices and expedient content delivery. Not at Lookout. French flaps, beautiful graphic design and tailored page layouts are the hallmarks of a book that someone cares about. (On the rare occasions that you see a book this carefully created from a big publisher, you know it was the pet project of someone in the office who went the extra mile.) At Lookout, each book radiates that level of care. Perhaps that is the best argument for smaller presses: Because each book takes so much time and effort, they put out few in a year (Lookout produces only one or two annually), and each book is almost a sacred experience. Any author would swoon to have his or her work treated with such reverence, especially for one's debut novel.

Curious about the selection process for Lookout's first novel, I reached out to Emily Smith, publisher and co-founder of Lookout. Smith writes, "Null evokes the virgin forest as a fully realized character we grieve deeply by the end of the novel. He implores us to care about the ecological tragedy in West Virginia through story . . . it presented a rare opportunity for our publishing entities to better align our missions and to showcase a book in which place and the natural world feature prominently."

Ecotone, the sister imprint, place-centric magazine, published Null's story

"The Island in the Gorge of the Great River" in the spring 2014 issue. Null, the then-emerging writer, had not published a book, which appealed to Lookout, whose mission states "seeks out emerging and historically underrepresented voices, as well as overlooked gems by established writers." In manuscript form, Smith was attracted to this novel's "nuanced and lyrical descriptions of the natural world, its expansive and cinematic pace."

Lookout has enjoyed success with previous publications, like their first one, Edith Pearlman's story collection *Binocular Vision*, a finalist for the National Book Award in 2011. The following year, Lookout published Steve Almond's story collection *God Bless America: Stories*, which won the Paterson Fiction Prize. They know how to pick a winner and how to present one.

"... he would recreate the moment in stunning, captivating, undulating prose, drawing the experience out for paragraphs if not pages, intensifying the moment ..."

I can only imagine the stunned grin that must have spread across Null's face the moment he received his first novel in Lookout-form. But, from reading *Honey From The Lion*, I am certain he would recreate the moment in stunning, captivating, undulating prose, drawing the experience out for paragraphs if not pages, intensifying the moment to something epic in contrast to the momentary sensation of pages in hands.

A part of the Creative Writing program at UNC Wilmington, Lookout ensures that the art of bookmaking continues to live hand-in-hand with the art of writing. It may be one of the most valuable lessons to impart on to the next generation of writers. Because, as in Lookout's new novel, each page holds moments experienced in-depth that draw and enlighten the darkened corners of each character's soul. Value the written word (and the well-designed book) as something sacred, for it will out live all of us.

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

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Autumn Brews

And a few other of my seasonal favorites

By Jason Frye

This is my favorite time of year. The air turns crisp. The first tinges of color touch the top of the tallest trees. At night, you need to cozy up to a little backyard fire unless you've remembered your flannel shirt, and even then, you might catch a chill.

Autumn is around the corner and everything says her name.

Unless you live here, in Wilmington, on the Southeastern coast of North Carolina.

Here, September and October are not fall months, they're an extension of summer. Oh, we get some cooler nights and from time to time the breeze attains a wee nip, but the ocean's still swimmable and everyone will sport shorts and flip-flops until Halloween. But the leaves — in my yard at least — don't blaze with autumn color, they just turn crispy and fall off. Then I rake them up and put them in bags.

There's something satisfying about raking the yard. Dividing the foliage floor with pulls of the rake. Clean squares of green grass emerge save circular mounds of leaves in the centers, like pips on a die. Move to the next section, repeat. One square becomes two becomes three, and the pips grow, setting the line. When the yard has become a grid, each pipped with a mound of leaves — boxcars if the lawn was a craps table — grab the bags and rake the piles into the bag. Soon, the yard is clean and the grass is green and I dare the wind to bring one more brown leaf down onto this pristine patch of land. Which it does, but by that time, I've earned a reward: a little fire in the yard, some music, a cold beer. Maybe cards at the table, a little Talking Heads playing, and that cold beer.

I love a sour beer or a wild ale, but the first beer that I actually liked wasn't the Stroh's I sipped as a tot in my grandfather's kitchen, it was a stout. Dark and robust, rich, nutty, a little smoky, it tasted like fall. It tasted like everything good from my birthday (Oct. 10, if you're planning to send a gift) and from the first drink, this style of beer gained my loyalty.

Which is why I'm glad I live in North Carolina. Our beer game has grown strong in the last decade, and our local breweries always offer a growler of some stout or porter that drives me to finish my leaf-raking, garden-prepping, chore-doing fall task just a little faster.

Blair's Breakfast Stout from Wilmington Brewing Company brings me back to those fall days of my youth in West Virginia: the smell of my grandfather's clothes after burning a cover crop off his garden, the tannic scent of oak leaves underfoot, the cold glass of relief for work-warmed hands. A growler or crowler (that's a fancy name for a on-demand canned beer) of this will set you right.

And if you want something a touch sweeter, Waterline Brewing's Oatmeal Stout — dark as black walnut stains on your palms — drinks a little lighter and has a touch of chocolate and bite of coffee in each sip. It's an easy drink, one to have close at hand as you're kneeling by your fire-pit, breaking the sticks you pulled from each pile of leaves — they'll only poke holes in the bag and besides, they're perfect for kindling your fire —and laying them over your tinder as evening rolls in, bringing the promise of a cooler night, one where you can sip and talk, maybe scoot your chair a little closer to the fire.

Wilmington Brewing Company is located at 824 Kerr Ave., Wilmington. Imbibe in their family-friendly taproom, beer garden or grab something to go. Call 910-392-3315 or visit www.wilmingtonbeer.com for menu and hours.

Waterline Brewing is located at 721 Surry St., Wilmington, under the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. Call 910-777-5599 or visit www.waterlinebrewing.com for hours and to find which local bars serve their brews.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW SHERMAN

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Your Prescription Drugs: Info on Expirations, Generics & On-line Shopping
Presented by Michael Barron, Dr. of Business Development/Global Stability Study
Quality Chemical Laboratories
Monday, October 10, 2016 at 3 p.m.
Brightmore Independent Living: 2324 South 41st Street

Join us for this session, which will cover expiration dates, how they are established and their meaning as well as a discussion on how generic drugs and innovator brands are equivalents, but not the same, and the pros and cons of on-line shopping for drugs. This will be interactive so participants are invited to bring questions. **RSVP by Friday, October 7th, 2016.**

"Fall Festival Fundraiser for Alzheimers"
Presented by Brightmore of Wilmington
Friday, October 28th , 2016, 11:30-2:30 p.m.
Lawn by the Brightmore of Wilmington Campus Fountain & Pond: 2320 South 41st Street

Join us for a festive fall lunch by our campus fountain and pond for our 8th Annual Commemoration of Alzheimer's Awareness Month. Enjoy fall foods, beverages, music, raffles and more! Tickets, available on event day, may be purchased and exchanged for food and festivities including opportunities to win one or more of the 75+ displayed raffle items, all generously donated by area businesses. Proceeds benefit Alzheimer's NC and support local families caring for a family member with Alzheimer's or dementia. **RSVP by Wednesday, October 26th, 2016.**

"Unlocking Hidden Life Insurance Assets: Options for Funding Senior Living"
Presented by Rick Binford, Chief Settlement Advisor, Vista Life Settlements
Tuesday, November 1st, 2016 at 3 p.m.
Brightmore Independent Living: 2324 South 41st Street

Last year, US seniors missed out on over $212 Billion in potential cash pay outs - most because they were simply unaware of an important option available. Learn how government sanctioned life settlement transactions can eliminate future life insurance premiums and convert no longer necessary policies into cash to fund senior living or charitable giving, supplement retirement income, retire debt, or simply enjoy more financial freedom. **RSVP by Monday, October 31st, 2016.**

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The Sterling Brunch

Over perfect brioche and chicken liver mousse at Pinpoint, straight talk on why we love – and hate – some TV commercials

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

By Dana Sachs

Elizabeth Rogers runs an advertising agency, but she doesn't advertise it. In fact, she doesn't even have a website. Her Wilmington-based firm, Sterling Concepts, keeps a low profile, and for an understandable reason, too. Her client list amounts to a company secret.

"I know this is ridiculous," says Elizabeth, laughing, over brunch at Pinpoint restaurant downtown. She and her business partner, Amy Andrews, create commercials for businesses, then buy airtime for the ads on radio and television stations. By not divulging the names of their clients, they get low ad rates and keep their competitors — other advertising firms — guessing. Turning themselves into a stealth operation, Elizabeth explains, is "just the nature of the business."

You've probably seen or heard Sterling Concepts' ads. If you watch TV or listen to the radio in Wilmington or, increasingly, in markets across the country, you might have listened to one of their dentist spots during your morning commute or seen one of their home improvement ads while watching "Jeopardy!" People who aren't in the market for a dentist or home improvement products may ignore the ads altogether, but they're still part of Elizabeth's intended audience. "You'll always reach people who don't need your product," she says. "But you could get a customer who has been seeing it for two years and then it finally clicks: 'Oh! I need new countertops!'"

After working as a script supervisor right out of college, Elizabeth began her advertising career on the opposite side of the business from where she sits now, selling airtime for the modern rock station Surf 107. Exuberant and adventurous, she had the right personality for a business promoting pop hits, sun, sand and a laid-back lifestyle. "I went to concerts all the time. Happy hours. People say that a great salesperson can sell anything, but it helps if you're selling something you love, and I loved the music."

After Elizabeth got married and started a family, though, the fun wasn't so fun anymore. She worked live remote broadcasts from various places around town, and those events began to feel less like a party and more like work. "Six hours at the car lot. On a Saturday. And pregnant. In August," she says, letting a few choice phrases explain the reasoning behind a major life decision. In 2005, Elizabeth left the radio station, and she teamed up with Amy to form Sterling Concepts.

Both partners work from home, Amy in Asheville and Elizabeth in Wilmington. Elizabeth runs her office out of the house she shares with her husband, Darryl Elizabeth, their three sons, a cat and a yard full of chickens

and rabbits. On a typical morning, she might spend an hour negotiating a major national TV deal, then run outside to check on a sick rooster. This tangle of home and professional life creates a strange sort of synergy. When she and Amy needed a bunch of children for a pizza commercial, for example, Elizabeth cast her own kids. Don't call her a stage mom, however. Her reasons were practical: "Free labor," she tells me.

Speaking of labor. On the morning of our brunch, one of Elizabeth's rabbits is due to give birth. An event like that doesn't call for boiling water and tearing sheets, but it does dampen Elizabeth's enthusiasm for the deviled rabbit served with our charcuterie platter. "I like it," she says, after some hesitation. "It is a little tough for me, because of the baby bunnies, but it is good." (Author's note: Six healthy "kits" arrived the next day.)

Elizabeth doesn't show the same concern when facing Pinpoint's decadent chicken liver mousse, despite her poultry flock back home. "Where do I buy a little block of that?" she asks, after tasting.

Pinpoint, which opened in 2015, specializes in fresh local ingredients, and the chef, co-owner Dean Neff, has come up with original presentations for brunch standards. Coffee cake, for example, appears in bite-sized squares as an appetizer before the meal even starts ("Delightful," declares Elizabeth). For the eggs Benedict, Neff places poached eggs atop crispy potato pancakes, which Elizabeth notes offer "a deeper, more complex taste" than the dish's typical English muffin. As for the French toast, Pinpoint's version uses house-made brioche and arrives at the table with maple syrup, fresh strawberries and a froth of almond sabayon. "The brioche is so light," says Elizabeth. "Love it, love it, love it."

Even though Sterling Concepts doesn't run a website of its own, the company conducts business on the internet as well as on radio and TV. Success depends on tailoring a client's ad buys to the medium that best suits the merchandise they're trying to sell. "Demographics are key," Elizabeth explains.

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For high-end home improvement products, for example, she might purchase programming that targets a wealthy clientele. For medical supply companies, depending on the product, she may purchase programming that attracts a lower-income audience or programs that skew more toward men.

"What if you don't like one of the products that you're advertising?" I ask.

We have a table in the front of the restaurant and Elizabeth pauses for a moment, looking out the window toward the lively Saturday morning scene on Market Street. "If I think my clients are doing something that's a bad idea," she says, "I will tell them, and if they want to move forward, it's their call." In the end, she explains, the roles are clearly defined. "Our goal is to make sure we increase the calls" that an advertiser receives. "After that, it's the client's job to close the deal."

And, yes, Elizabeth knows that you hate commercials. Often, she hates them, too. Leaning toward me from across the table, she lets her voice slip into a particularly grating Southern twang and proceeds to recite the familiar, ubiquitous jingle for Stevenson Honda (not her client): "'If it has our *name* on it, you have our *word* on it.'" She sits back and rolls her eyes in annoyance, then describes her own response as a potential auto-buying customer. "I thought: Never!"

After a moment, though, a grin sweeps across Elizabeth Rogers' face and she begins to laugh. "But that's where I bought my Honda," she admits. Then, she shrugs and speaks the hard truth about advertising: "It works."

Pinpoint Restaurant is located at 114 Market St. in Wilmington. For more information, call (910) 769-2972 or visit pinpointrestaurant.com. You can find out more about Sterling Concepts by calling (910) 471-3131 or writing to sterlingconceptsliz@gmail.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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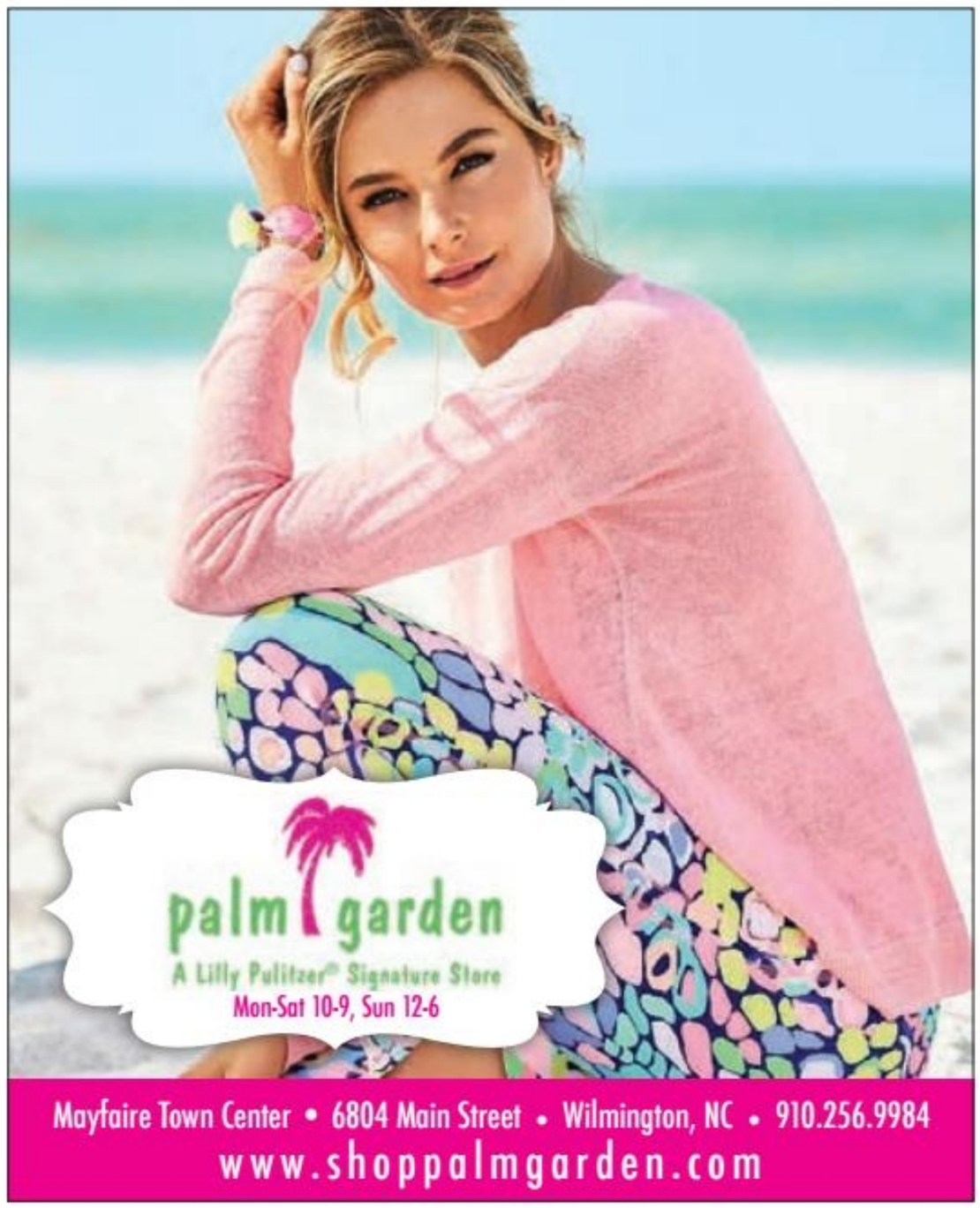
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Where the Wild Snakes Roam

Firsthand accounts of Surf City's infamous rattlesnake hunts from the men who bagged them

By Robert Rehder

Late in the summer of 1965 — for reasons yet unknown — hundreds of snakes, primarily Canebrake rattlesnakes, became abnormally active on the island of Surf City, triggering a series of fantastic snake hunts.

Charlie Jones and Frank Henry are *herps* — that's short for herpetologists, who, in most cases, are credentialed reptile scientists. In Southern swamp-speak the shortened moniker can also refer to snake hunters — a curious band of veteran woodsmen who hunt an animal with the ability to maim or kill you before you can even see it. Jones, a former Outward Bound instructor and Navy veteran, and Henry, a seasoned bush pilot and Army veteran, have both lived in close contact with nature their entire lives. They are both college-educated men, but with a passion for perilous outdoor adventure.

Three of the darkest, most treacherous, most formidable snake-infested swamps in all the South lie along the North Carolina coast. The Great Dismal Swamp, the Green Swamp, and the Angola are home to every creeping, crawling, death-dealing creature imaginable. Those places are not without their own strange stories, and some are even real: panthers flashing rows of razor teeth, wild boar with ivory tusks, 6-foot water moccasins that eat rabbits, to name a few. Jones and Henry are no strangers to those swamps — but that's not where they were hunting this particular September afternoon in 1965. They were hunting in Surf City.

But wait — Surf City? The cozy, coastal, Topsail Island paradise? Could this be a place where snakes went wild? Oh, but it could.

One week in late August 1965, the Surf City rattlesnake rampage came into its own. It started one afternoon when a farm worker reported several large snakes that buzzed and hissed from the border of the field he was tending on the farm of Alex Trask Sr. Word of the sighting circled around to Jones, who immediately identified the buzz as the age-old rattlesnake warning system. Jones and Henry planned the first of many trips to the Trask farms. Other snake men from the area, Roy Armstrong, Charlie Davis, Allen Warwick, Stan Rehder, Carl Hiatt and Rafe Jones, soon joined them.

Part of Surf City lies on Topsail Island, home to miles of Crystal Coast beach. The barrier island has a rich maritime history infused with tales of pirates who moored their sloops in secluded bays hidden by massive dunes and dense maritime forests nurtured by layers of peat subsoil deposited there eons ago. From those quiet, clear waters, the pirates set out to sea brandishing cannons, swords and muskets, striking fear as they ambushed hapless merchant vessels sailing along the coast. Those peaceful bays remain today much as they did in Blackbeard's time, and while steady development has absorbed much of the island's land mass, remnants of the original groves of yaupon, oak and myrtle remain intact.

Alex Trask Sr. built a cottage in one of those native groves in the early 1960s. The cottage overlooked a vast marsh to the west, and to the north he cultivated acres of land that yielded bountiful grain crops. Mr. Trask's primary interest was duck hunting in the nearby brackish marshes, but — being an experienced farmer — he and his sons, Alex Trask Jr. and Bill Trask, cleared acreage for planting soybeans, corn and wheat. That's how the stage was set.

"We farmed Permuda Island, Heath Island, and three pieces near what is now the N.C. 210 Bridge," says Bill Trask. "The farms had both native and migratory song birds, doves, geese, ducks, quail, raccoons, deer and Canebrake rattlesnakes."

From the N.C. Highway 210 Bridge to North Topsail Island, less than a mile south on Island Drive, a farm gate guards the old Trask property. With a creak and a moan, the gate slowly swings open and leads through a wall of thick vegetation, down a winding, rutted path to the site of the 1960s cottage.

Back then, in the process of clearing the land, great mounds of earthy material were pushed up along the field borders. Those mounds did double duty as protective berms against saltwater intrusion from lunar tides and hurricane surges, but also as condominium-style lodging for the bumper crop of field mice produced by a smorgasbord of grain in the fields below. No one knows exactly how or when the snakes arrived, but in the natural order of Southern ecosystems, it was sure to happen. A complex structure of wood and organic debris laced with communities of field mice makes a prime habitat for Canebrake rattlers.

Coastal Canebrakes are lighter in color than their upland cousins, Timber rattlers, and often wear a distinctive mottled-pink hue. They feed on rodents and other small mammals and give live birth to venomous young in August or September. A large pit viper of this variety can grow up to 5 feet and inflicts a deadly bite with toxic venom.

What actually caused the rattlesnakes to become uncommonly *aggressive* that year is a question often debated among locals and herpetologists alike. Some say it was an unseasonably cool late-summer storm known to locals as a

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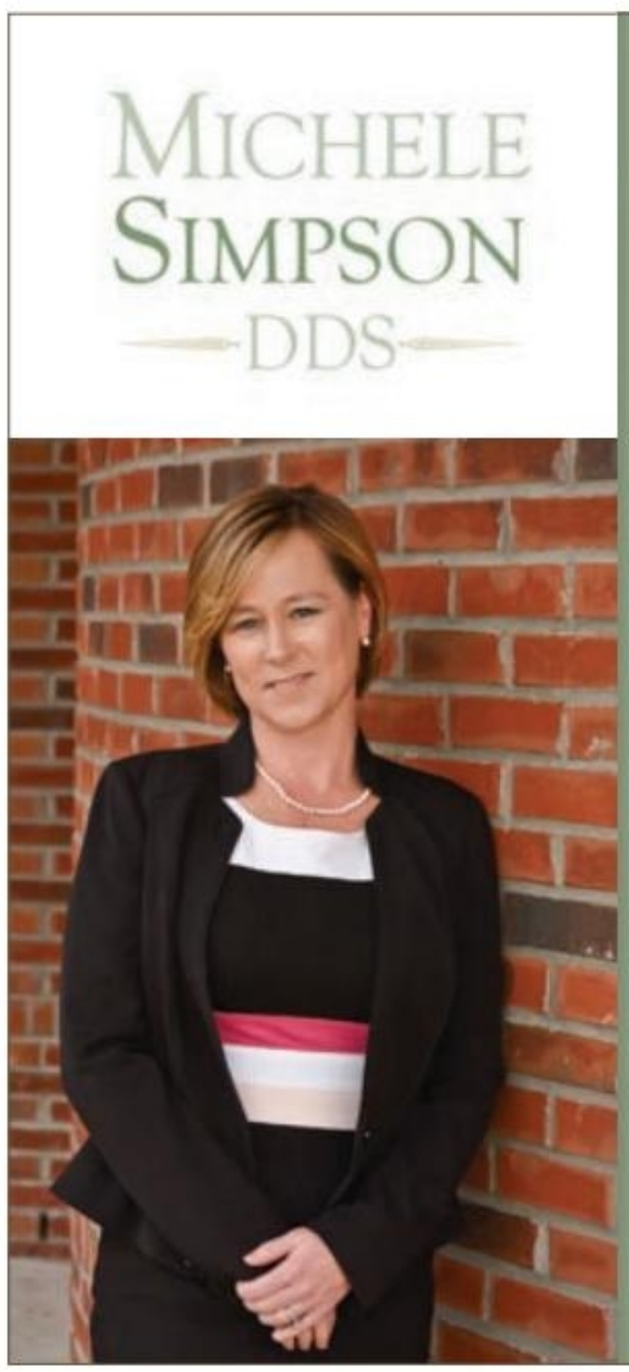

"northeaster." Animals are highly tuned to changes in normal weather patterns, and with a drop in barometric pressure associated with coastal storms, they become active and can feed ravenously. Others say the aggression was caused by a sudden die-off in the field mouse population. With a loss of their primary food source, the snakes could have become highly aggressive and on the hunt. Whatever the reason, it was a phenomenon not seen before or since.

On their first their trip to the Trask farm, Jones remembers a hot September sun rising slowly above sleepy Topsail Island. A ravaged section of roof snatched from some mainland shed protruded from the sand. A torn timber pierced by jagged rows of rusted nails clung to one end of the roof, a latent reminder of Hurricane Hilda's wrath.

Jones and Henry approached quietly, cautiously. They had already enjoyed a good morning's hunt; their thick canvas sacks bulged and writhed as if the sacks themselves were alive. They hooked their Land Rover's winch to the timber and dragged the entire roof aside to expose the shaded lair below. Nothing could have prepared them for what lurked beneath.

"Five very aggressive Canebrake rattlers," says Henry.

"That was just on one end," says Jones. "Three copperheads, two chicken snakes, one moccasin and two black racers crawled out the back end of that lair." Rattlesnakes, copperheads and moccasins strike when threatened, and Jones and Henry had just threatened an entire lair.

The snakes turned their diamond-shaped heads in the direction of the intruders. With a surge of adrenaline, the two men went into action. An intense, athletic duel ensued — one that could easily turn fatal. Minutes turned to seconds as the big snakes coiled, ready to strike, within feet of sinking their needle-sharp fangs into the intruder's ankles. The men pinned the venomous creatures to the ground with industrial tongs as fast as they could. Some snakes were attempting a mass exodus between their feet, but the Canebrakes held their ground. The hot, damp air vibrated with the eerie sound of multiple death-warning rattles. Jones and Henry usually have a game plan, but they were caught off-guard by the sheer number and variety of snakes.

"As one of us caught a snake, the other would hold open the canvas drawstring sack, and the first would release the tongs and drop the snake into the sack . . . then very quickly draw the string before the creature could arch up through the opening and strike," says Jones. They traded back and forth — pinning, wrangling, and bagging. Sometimes a snake had to wrap its body around the tong handles so the men would pry it off and shake it into the bag — a bag filled with other snakes. The sight would terrify most humans — knowing that your life could be one min-

ute closer to ending. Death would come slowly, painfully, from a cocktail of vicious hemotoxic chemicals: massive uncontrolled interior bleeding, panic, loss of vision and, in the end, organ shutdown far from any hospital.

Not Jones and Henry. To them, this scene was the whole point, as if they had no expectation of living forever. They simply engaged in a battle that had no rules, no strategies, only a countless combinations of foot and hand actions — offensive and quickly defensive to deflect the strike — feint and lunge. They bagged every poisonous snake. It was over in minutes.

"It was the most intense hunt I can recall," says Jones. The men packed up their vehicle and left the farm with a trunk of venomous snakes and a story to tell.

Another time at nearby Heath Island, "We found an abandoned, wooden-hulled fishing boat that washed up on the shore during a storm. I was looking under the boat for snakes when we heard a scuffling movement in the plywood cabin ceiling. I managed to tear down a portion overhead, and to our surprise nine fat chicken snakes piled out onto the deck where we stood," remembers Jones.

"We hunted on Permuda Island," says Stewart Y. Benson, a surveyor who also caught rattlesnakes during this era. "The Canebrakes over on Surf City probably came from Permuda originally and don't think they can't swim. They normally will not strike unless threatened, but if you make the mistake of stepping on one . . . Well, let's just say things get interesting at that point."

Allen Warwick, an outdoorsman and veteran snake hunter, remembers finding rattlesnakes all over the Trask farms — "in the pump houses, in the yards, under the decks, but mostly around the brush mounds. A 5-foot Canebrake Rattlesnake is a very strong creature — difficult to catch and uncommonly aggressive when handling."

What do you do with all those snakes? "We never killed snakes but sold them to zoos, or donated them to schools and museums," explains Warwick.

"The going price at that time was fifty cents a pound for the nonpoisonous species and $1 a foot for pit vipers: Canebrakes, moccasins and copperheads. Those were our college and high school years, and it was one way to make some extra money."

Thomas Tackle and Seafood on Highway 50, just before the swing bridge to Topsail Island, has been a Surf City icon for over 50 years. Behind the counter, Doug Thomas talks to customers while weighing out an order of fresh-that-morning jumbo shrimp. He speaks with a soft, Southern accent, his eyes flashing as he recalls a story about rattlesnakes:

"Back then the 210 bridge had not been built," says Thomas, "and there was little development here. We were about the only store around, so the guys who would go over to the island to work the farms, roads and impoundments at Permuda, Heath and the Trask farm would stop back at the store in the afternoons for a drink and a pack of nabs. It was nothing for them to bring in two or three rattles from Canebrakes they had tangled with during the day. Some rattles had as many as 10 sections. For years we tied them five or six to a bundle and hung them from a beam in the ceiling of the store. I'd say there were a hundred, easy. The customers would glance up and see them. They would all gasp and ask about the rattlesnake stories."

"Other than man, Canebrakes have few natural enemies, especially on an island like Surf City," says Jones. "The conditions there were near perfect for them, and so 100 snakes in a colony could easily turn into 1,000 in a very short period of time."

Perhaps we will never know what caused the rattlesnake rampage of the 1960s. It was a long time ago and thankfully short-lived. Could it ever happen again? Never say never. The remnants of those old berms are still there, so next time you're out on the island, make sure you watch your step.

Robert Rehder writes from his home in Wilmington. His work has appeared in Wildlife in North Carolina, Quail Unlimited, *and* Our State *magazine*

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The Old Way Home

Thoughts come vividly on a road less traveled

By Bill Thompson

On my way home from Elizabeth City I decided to take the road less traveled by. NC Highway 17 is the most direct route back to southeastern North Carolina but I wanted to go "the old way," on the roads I traveled when I began criss-crossing the state on a regular basis over 50 years ago. I wanted to revisit those little towns like Pactolus and Bear Grass and Greenevers and all those other little wide places in the road that happen to have a sign designating their existence.

I didn't need a GPS to find my way. (In my car GPS means Gone Past the Sign.) I could follow those old two-lane roads from memories of days and nights coming and going to speak to all kinds of groups and celebrating so many small-town festivals.

It was mid-morning when I left Elizabeth City, so the sun was behind me as I headed in a generally south-southwesterly direction. The sun didn't cast too many shadows on that flat land. I could go for miles and the tallest things I would see were a few pine trees in the distance among acres and acres of corn and soybean fields. Small, neat little houses sat in the midst of the fields, and behind the houses were old tobacco barns lilting to the side, their rusted tin roofs atop rotten wooden sides held up entirely by vines.

In the mid-summers so many years ago, those fields would have been filled with tobacco plants, their big, green leaves lapped over each other row after row, soaking up the hot sun. And somewhere in that field, bent under the big leaves, were men and boys "cropping" the leaves from the stalks. Their shirts would be soaked with sweat as they rose up with their arms filled with leaves. Then they placed them in the "drags" or trailers that would take the crop from the field to the curing barn. I have worked in fields like that.

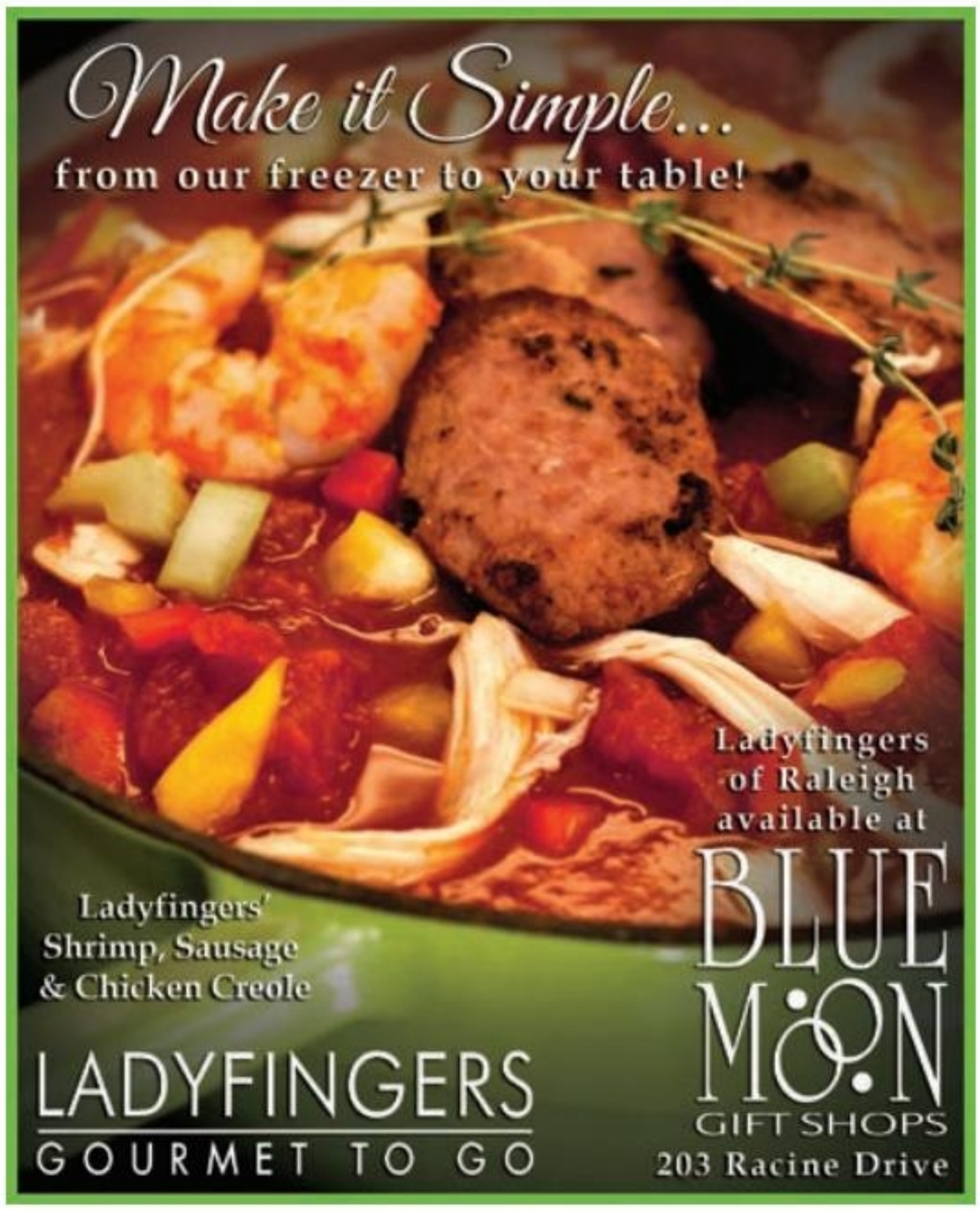
Of course, folks today don't see those fields as I do. Today tobacco is a bad thing and, certainly, its use is not good for you. But I couldn't help but reflect on what tobacco meant to so many families like mine. I guess it depends on your perspective.

If, when you say "tobacco" you mean that noxious vegetation which, in its processed form, creates a smoke that permeates the lungs of young and old alike, eating away the tissue of that vital organ, a smoke that causes a stench in the clothes we wear and the furniture on which we rest and the very breath we breathe; if you mean that agricultural endeavor whose harvest has caused young men to toil in the heat of the day until they collapsed from exhaustion; if you mean that dried weed whose dust clogs the nostrils and fills the lungs until coated black as a sinners heart, then I am against it.

But if by "tobacco" you mean that product of Carolina soil, the source of livelihood for thousands of families for generations, that provided the funds to send the sons and daughters of poor tenant farmers to college, that built churches where the loving spirit of The Creator is made known to all who enter the doors, that kept many an able-bodied man off the welfare rolls and filled the coffers of every clothier, grocer and merchant in every small town across this state; if you mean that commodity from which the sale thereof created the taxes that paved the roads that now traverse the length and breadth of this great state, that built the schools that educated and continue to educate the leaders of our communities; if you mean that golden leaf whose heady aroma emitted from the curing barn wafts across the summer night weaving its spell like the perfume of a beautiful woman; if you mean that product that has given solace and comfort to those at the end of a day in which they have struggled mightily to make a living from the land or who have finally found a respite from the heat and monotony of the mill; if you mean that smoke created in the bowl of a pipe as men sit together in commonality and devise solutions to those social ills that beset us; if you mean that cigar proffered as congratulations at the birth of a child or reward for achievement; if you mean that crop whose history is irretrievably tied to the existence and development of this state, the South and this country, then, my friend, I am for it.

I thought about that driving "the old way" back from Elizabeth City. Like our historic ties to tobacco, it was a long and winding road.

Bill Thompson is a frequent – and wise –contributor to Salt Magazine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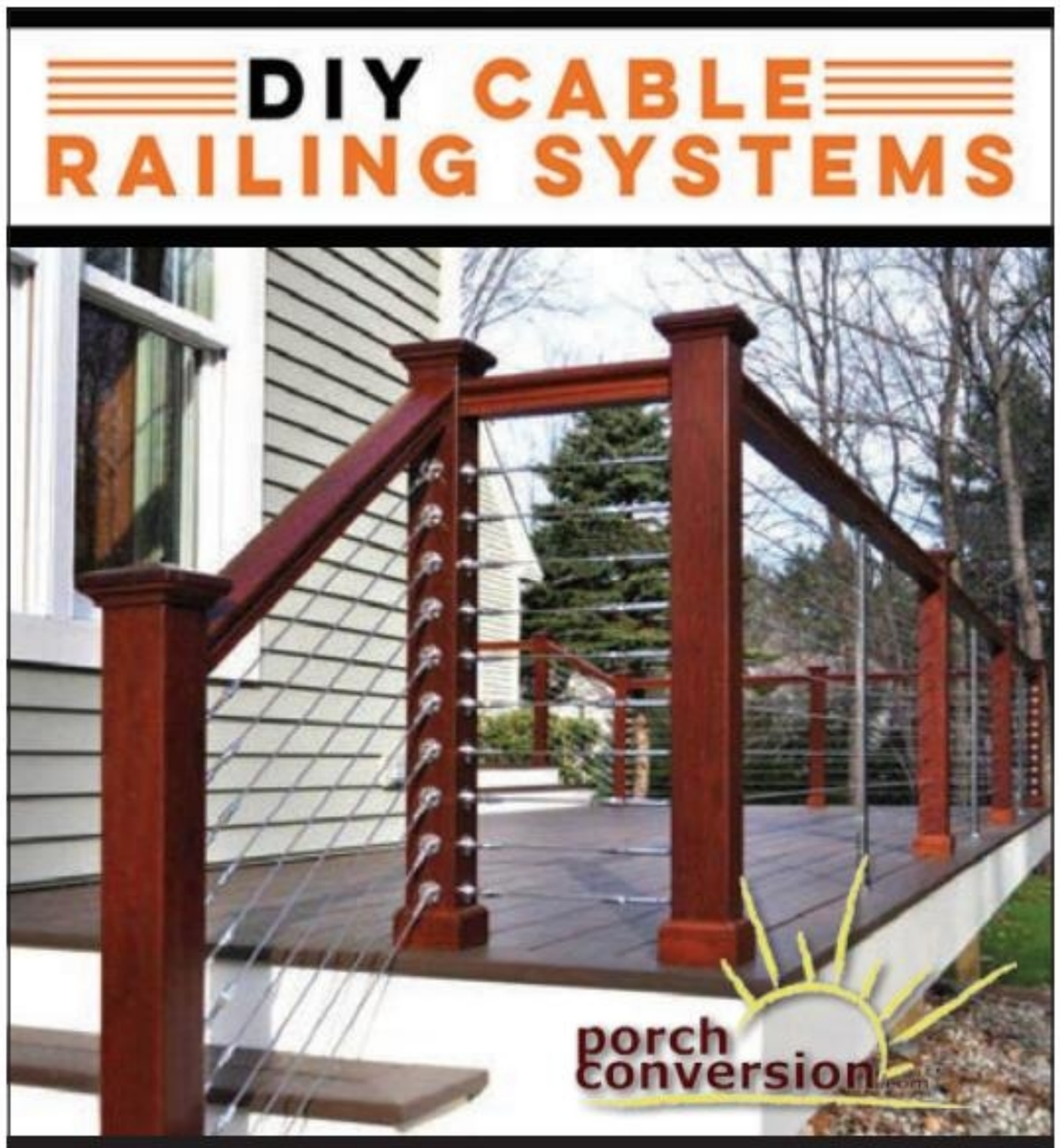
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East-meets-Western Tanager

Keep and eye out for this colorful, wandering songbird

By Susan Campbell

Along the coast of North Carolina, we occasionally find western wanderers soaring overhead, perched in the treetops, or even at a feeder. Endowed with wings, birds can (and do) end up anywhere. That is the most exciting part of birdwatching: You never know who might show up!

Some birds are quite prone to vagrancy. Whether this is a result of wandering, getting lost or blown off course, we usually cannot say for certain. Species that are long-distance migrants are, not surprisingly, at risk for mishaps en route. Very little about migration is understood even though it has been studied a great deal. The facts are that birds do migrate and most individuals are successful, which allows their genes to propagate the next generation. Birds that end up off track are not bound to stay lost forever or perish due to a wrong turn. In fact, we believe that these outliers, these out-of-place individuals, can represent the beginning of a range expansion for their species. Some wrong turns are fortuitous! Historical records have been kept long enough that we now have documented evidence of bird populations shifting to new areas of the United States.

The western tanager is one species that has been observed in the winter more and more frequently outside its normal range. This small but colorful songbird, mainly yellow with a red-orange blaze on its face and black wings, is found in wooded habitats in the western United States during the summer months. Come fall, they head for Mexico and Central America. However, in the early 1990s, one showed up at a feeder in Wilmington and stayed — not just one winter — but returned for two more. It fed on suet, shelled seeds and fruit during its stay. Since then, more than a dozen other western tanagers have been documented along the southern coast of our state.

What does this mean? It is probably too soon to tell if they'll be frequent visitors, but Southeastern bird lovers should keep an eye out for westerns this winter. A western could certainly turn up.

Anyone feeding Baltimore orioles has the best chance of having a western mixed in. They are similar in size and shape to orioles, but have a heavier bill. They will be incognito; all tanagers molt twice a year and happen to be drab from early fall through early spring, making identification tricky when these birds appear in the east. But, unlike our more familiar summer and scarlet tanagers, westerns have noticeable barring on their wings and are a bit brighter yellow on their under parts.

I would wager that very few people reading this column have ever seen a western tanager, but it pays to be prepared with binoculars and a good field guide should something odd like this show up. Rarities are always possible — whether you are visiting a large wildlife refuge, or local park, a McDonald's parking lot or simply your own backyard.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos via email at susan@ncaves.com

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Fast Albert

An angler's banner day at Cape Lookout

By Rip Woodin

What should a sports fanatic do on a sunny fall Saturday?

A. Go to Kenan Stadium

B. Tee it up in Pinehurst

C. Find a dove field

D. Chase false albacore in the ocean.

Answer: If you're a fly fisher, D.

Sure, it's fun to watch Tar Heel Ryan Switzer run back a punt, sink a long birdie putt or shoot a fast jinking dove, but none of those compares to the adrenaline rush of hooking a false albacore, then feeling this brute of a fish peel off 100 yards of line in seconds.

October is the best month of fly fishing when false albacore, Spanish mackerel and bluefish gorge on little baitfish as they prepare to migrate south. The false albacore — an offshore fish shunned by trolling charter boats because its flesh is inedible — come in close to shore in late August and peak in October and November or until chilling water (60 degrees) pushes the bait toward Florida. When the bait leaves, so do the albacore.

Up and down the North Carolina coast from Wrightsville Beach to Currituck, the false albacore season lasts two to three weeks in October, according to Capt. Allen Cain, a Wilmington-area guide. The good part is the waters near Wrightsville aren't crowded, Cain added, since most boats are looking for Spanish and king mackerel, but the season is short and the fish smaller. The epicenter of action is up the Crystal Coast, from Swansboro to Cape Lookout.

A bucket list item for fly fishermen across the country, many anglers from "up north" put a week or two on their fall calendars every year to fish for "albies." They risk what insurance agents call "AD&D" dragging their boats 500 miles down the I-95 racetrack. Funny accents fill up the spartan motels on Harkers Island, then at the Captain's Choice or Fish Hook Grill. Yankees know this place rivals Cape Cod and Montauk for big action.

False albacore generate such fanaticism because they're stronger than a bonefish on steroids. Bonefish swim fast when hooked; false albacore swim fast all the time. Built without a swim bladder, albacore must stay in perpetual motion. Their big forked tails would get them a ticket in a 35 mph speed zone. The fish will average five to eight pounds in the early season, but rise to 20 pounds in November when the bruisers show up — hence the nicknames "Fat Albert" and "Buffalo."

Fishing with a fly rod is all about hunting the quarry, then sight casting to feeding fish. Blind casting is just arm exercise. The best way to find a school of false albacore is to look for birds diving, preferably terns. Birds see bait in the water and circle overhead. Albacore herd the bait into a ball, then force it to the surface for a shower of silver. By now the birds are in full throat, either calling their buddies or cheering on the albacore; it's hard to tell which.

The albacore slash through the bait ball. Terns dip to the surface to grab pieces of fish. It's a frenetic show of culinary mayhem that brings boats gunning to the blitz with anglers no-less-rabid-than-the-birds, frantically casting into the melee to hook an Albert before the fish dive deep. Sometimes a handful of fish will disband after just a few seconds if the bait is spread out. A big, tight bait ball will keep the fish at the table for 5-10 minutes or maybe longer. The gluttony continues until all the baitfish are eaten or manage to escape the marauders. A sheen of fish oil on the water tells the story.

"You should have been here yesterday!" — most fishing conversations start like that. Well, half a dozen years ago, I finally got to be there "yesterday":

The sun had only been up at Cape Lookout for 30 minutes when we left the Harkers Island dock. The air was bright with anticipation as we ran down Back Sound toward the Barden's Inlet channel that leads to the diamond-painted lighthouse. The marsh grass had traded its summer green for fall gold, glowing in the slanted rays of the early morning light. A fireball sun rose above the lighthouse.

The radio crackles, "She's on 19." "She" was a peregrine falcon that had stopped for a week-long break on her migration south. The sleek brownish-gray bird perched on a green channel marker perusing the breakfast menu. "That's a good sign," says Capt. Brian Horsley. A prophetic sign. Rounding the Hook at the cape and into the ocean, we followed birds and looked for the splashes that give away feeding fish.

By the time Brian says, "Get your rod," I am already on the front of the boat, false casting to play out enough line to reach the fish flashing to the surface on nearly invisible bait. Cast and strip. Cast and strip. "Longer strips to move the

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RIP WOODIN

fly; we're floating forward," barks Brian.

On the third strip, the line came tight. Half a second later — the fish took off for Europe. I hang on and grin. The reel buzzes. Brian folds his arms and grins back, satisfied. Guide and angler had done their job.

The next pod of albies didn't take and disappeared after only showing for 20 seconds. "Must be males," Brian says with a straight face.

"How can you tell?" I ask skeptically.

"Fear of commitment."

A dozen squawking gulls several hundred yards away draw our attention. They are pushing and shoving to dive on the remnants of anchovies chewed by slashing green and silver torpedoes. Thousands of baitfish turn a bed-sized area into a rust-colored swirl being devoured by toothy predators. Bluefish eat anchovies. Spanish eat anchovies. Albacore eat anchovies. And the "brown suits" eat them all.

"Cast right in the middle!" Brian shouts.

"In the middle with those sharks?" Even I couldn't miss a target that big. Two strips and the tug-of-war is on again. I horsed the fish in before the black tips could get a big bite of Little Tunny. Cast again, hooked up again. Despite the 15-knot wind, I am sweating while pumping and reeling. My tortured forearms feel like I'd done a hundred 10 pound curls.

Next we go looking on the east side of Cape Lookout. There's a reason that the 163-foot-tall lighthouse was built on the Cape — the 21-mile stretch of shoals called the "Horrible Headland" and "Graveyard of the Atlantic." The shoals run north and south, often covered by only a few feet of water. Lots of mackerel, bluefish and false albacore pursue bait disoriented by the currents and waves. It's fly fishing heaven although there could be hell to pay by the boat captain who doesn't keep one eye on his depth finder and the other on the wave action.

After inviting three Spaniards to stay for dinner and releasing a few more Fat Alberts, the west wind gradually picks up, setting a trap for the greedy fishermen who linger too long on the wrong side of the shoals. We take heed and Brian sends the last albie home to the green depths. The howling wind hits us broadside with a saltwater shower like a cymbal crash as we head for quieter waters inside the Hook.

Tips for Anglers

- Bring your own 8- to 10-weight rod. If using a guide, most will provide fly rods.
- For fishermen with no fly rod experience, invest in a medium weight spinning rod, a good reel and a shiny lure like a Sting Silver. These can be fished from the beach as well.
- A heavy-in-the-head floating fly line like a Rio Outbound Short will punch through fall winds. When fish are not busting the surface, switch to a 400-500 grain sink tip line to get a fly down deep in a hurry.

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ON THE WATER

- A 7- to 9-foot knotless leader tapered to a 16- or 20- pound tippet is pretty standard. Fluorocarbon is tougher and thinner than monofilament, which helps if the fish get leader-shy.
- Try bait fish flies like the Clouser Minnow (pink, chartreuse or tan and white) on a number two hook Surf Candies sized to match the silversides bait. When the albacore get finicky, experienced anglers switch to a very small 1 to 2-inch epoxy fly in translucent white to match the tiny anchovies sometimes called "rain bait."
- Don't forget a quality rain jacket with hood, splash pants or bibs, boots, stocking cap and gloves. Late in October and November the winds can blow hard, churning the ocean, so it can be wet and cold.
- Employ the expertise of a fly fishing guide. Wilmington anglers, try Allen Cain, www.sight-fishnc.com. Brian Horsley and his wife, Sarah Gardner, can be reached at www.outerbanksfly-fishing.com. Try Jake Jordan, www.jakejordan.com. If albies aren't tough enough for you, he can put you on a blue marlin or sailfish on a fly — if that's even fathomable.

Rip Woodin, after a 44-year career in the newspaper business, is a full-time fly fisherman, golfer and writer.

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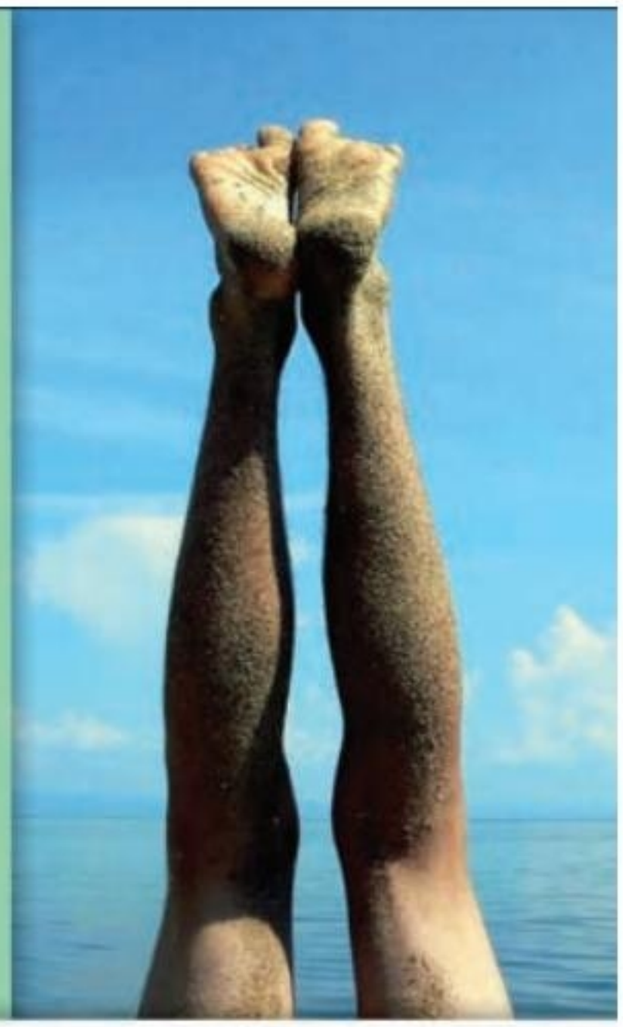

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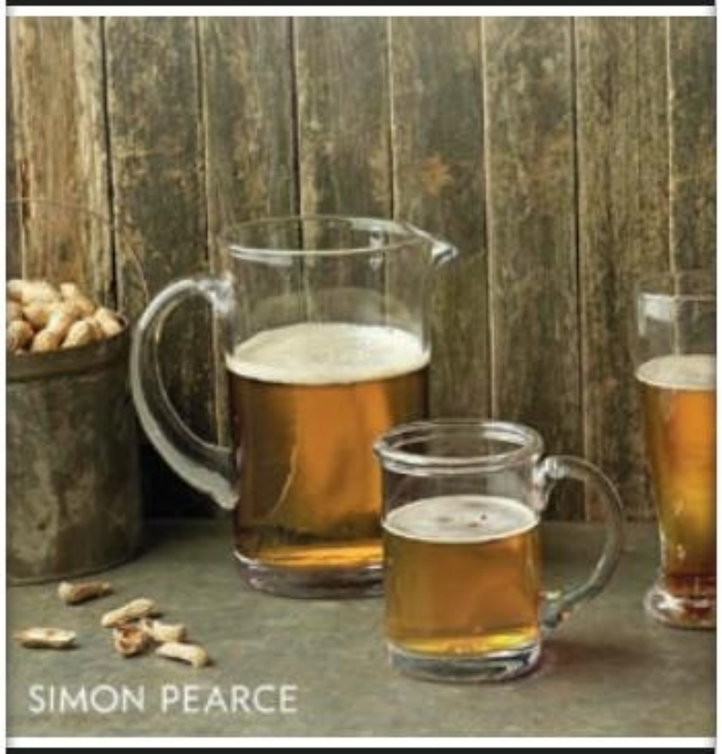

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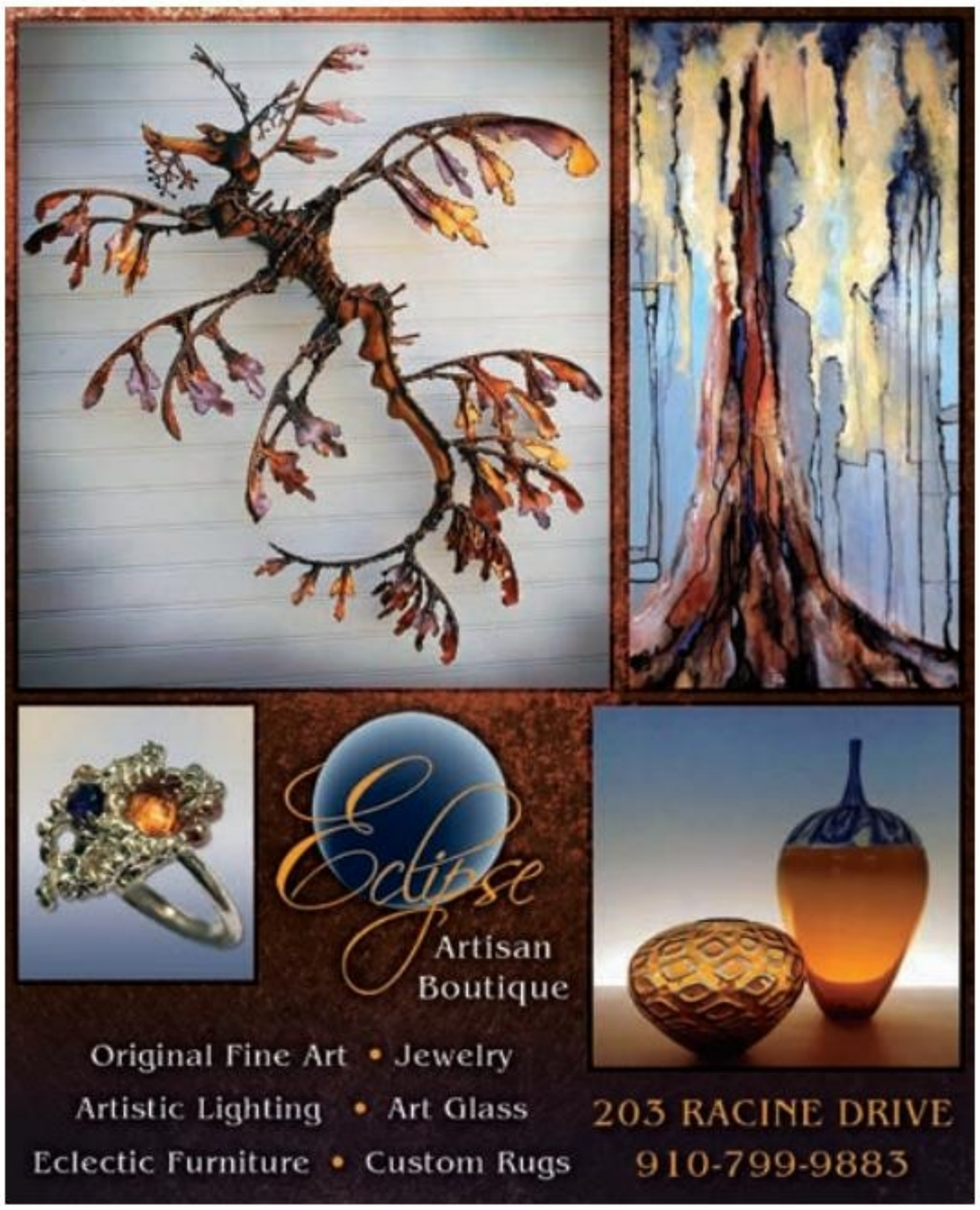

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The Great Escape

In a locked room full of hidden clues, the real trick to escaping is discovering why you are here

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN: MODELS ARE ROBERT SMITH III, ALLISON GRADY, SEAN OWENS, ARIANNA TYSINGER, KELSEY SANDERS

By Christine Hennessey

The entrance to the Cape Fear Escape Room is easy to miss. Located downtown, just off Front Street, an iron gate opens to a steep staircase leading down. On a muggy evening our group descends, leaving behind the bustle of cars and pedicabs, the diners sipping beer outside the Copper Penny and the slow boats idling along the river. At the bottom we push open a door and the five of us — me, my husband, another couple, a friend — step into the tiny foyer. Music plays softly while a water fountain gurgles in the corner. A large frosted-glass door looms — frosted — concealing what lies beyond. We will walk through it soon. Whether we find our way out remains to be determined.

*

An escape room is a live-action game in which a team of players is locked in a room. There, they must find clues, solve puzzles and decipher symbols in order to finagle their way out before their allotted time (usually an hour, give or take) is up. It's important to note that escape rooms aren't haunted houses in disguise. No one jumps out at you and screams, "Boo!" Monsters do not lurk in corners. The only time you interact with anyone other than your team is if you hit the buzzer and request a clue. You only get three, though, so use them wisely.

Some people view the escape room as the natural evolution of hedge mazes, popular in the 15th century, in which people were plopped in the center of a complicated problem — that is, the maze — and then had to navigate an exit. Others view escape rooms as a sort of living video game, more immediate and exciting than simply operating a joystick while staring at a screen. No matter where escape rooms trace their origin, one thing is clear: They are having a moment, and that moment is now.

The Cape Fear Escape Room opened its doors last October, offering two rooms that feature two very different games: a murder mystery, and a time travel adventure. Their second location, which purports to takes place in a speakeasy, opened in May. Port City Escape, a second company, launched their escape room sometime shortly after and included a game to uncover Blackbeard's treasure and another to stop the launch of a nuclear warhead. This trend isn't limited to Wilmington: escape rooms are popping up across America, a mystery unto themselves. Why are they so popular? Why are we drawn to them? What are we really trying to escape?

*

Before we enter the escape room, our gamemaster, a dark-haired young man who is clearly thrilled on our behalf, plays a video offering a brief backstory and informing us of our mission. He confiscates our phones — no videos or photos allowed — and sends us into the room. The door locks shut behind us.

It's hard to write about this or any escape room with specific details; to reveal too much would ruin the game. What I can tell you is that we're searching for Al Capone's hidden fortune. Everything we need to solve the puzzle is somewhere in the room. It's hard to tell what is a clue and what isn't — anything could lead to something, or to a dead end. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking. If we don't find our way out within 60 minutes, we lose.

That's exactly what happened during our inaugural visit. We'd gone to the Cape Fear Escape Room's first location a few months earlier. In that game — a murder mystery involving a doomed chemistry student — we ran out of time before finding our way out. We didn't escape, but we learned a lot and vowed that our next adventure would succeed. There's an art to the escape room. If you fail, the gamemaster will show you how you could have or should have solved it. Suddenly it clicks. There's a pattern to these games, certain tropes you only recognize in retrospect. Once you understand the process, the next attempt is easier. Possible.

*

The first official escape room debuted in 2006, in Japan. Since then they've multiplied, crossing borders and transcending languages, many of the clues and stories recycled, repurposed, spun to suit a particular country or city. No matter where they're located, however, they're marketed the same way. Great for corporate team building. A unique birthday party idea. An intrepid date night. At the Cape Fear Escape Room there's even a discount offered to Girl Scout troops working on their Secret Agent badge.

It makes sense. Whether you're an office manager, a newly minted 30-year-old, potential lovers, or a Girl Scout, the escape room is a revealing challenge. It requires communication and patience, and the best teams benefit from a range of skills, experiences and backgrounds. This becomes obvious as our team fumbles through the clues and races the clock. My husband, a scientist, methodically lines up our clues on the floor. Our friend, a math whiz, recognizes patterns in an instant. The couple brings balance to the game — she helps us stay organized, he stumbles across secrets haphazardly. While they all assure me I'm vital to our success, my main role appears to be cheerleader. In a way, every team that enters

the escape room — ours included — is a microcosm-of-society, in which we each bring something to the table with the potential to rescue us all. We are, quite literally, in it together.

Since that night in the underground speakeasy, I've thought about what the escape room means for me as a North Carolinian. I grew up in New York but left that liberal bastion for the South 12 years ago, a move I don't regret except for those moments — election seasons, mostly — when I do. Occasionally I feel trapped by my choices, hedged in by ideologies and shortsighted politicians, limited by invasive laws that threaten our humanity. I chose to come here and every day I choose to stay. But that doesn't mean I don't dream of a way out, or pine for ways to fix a system that sometimes feels broken. I search for clues daily, turning impossible puzzles over in my mind, hoping the key to a better future is within reach, waiting for something to click.

This, I think, is the root of the escape room phenomenon. Our fears reflect our world, and our boogeymen become metaphors. The belief in extraterrestrials and UFOs is an affront to the idea that we're alone in the universe. In recent years zombies have taken a bite out of our collective imagination, their infectious desire to consume brains caused, at least in part, by the terror of pandemics, like Ebola and now Zika. Even ghosts are rooted in our fear of death, our refusal to give up this world for the great unknown.

Escape rooms aren't frightening, but they reflect our collective predicament and need to solve something tangible. To get out of a situation we put ourselves in. After all, we entered this room on our own accord. We didn't know exactly what we were getting into, but we were curious. We wanted to be challenged, and maybe we got more than we bargained for, but we're here. We're together. Either we all get out, or none of us do.

*

For the next hour our team works together to escape the room. We unlock mysteries, solve puzzles, and waste precious minutes due to red herrings. However, thanks to communication, quick thinking, and a little luck, we map out a solution. We put the pieces together. The door swings open with seconds to spare. We escape.

We ascend the stairs, leave the strange world of the escape room and spill out, blinking, into the street. The sun is still bright, but a cool breeze comes off the river. The world clicks back into place, but it looks different, as if there are still patterns hidden around us, secrets we can't yet see. Around us people are eating and drinking and walking, going about their day, living their lives. They don't know where we're been, the choices we've made or how far we've traveled to arrive at this place.

Christine Hennessey writes and works in Wilmington.

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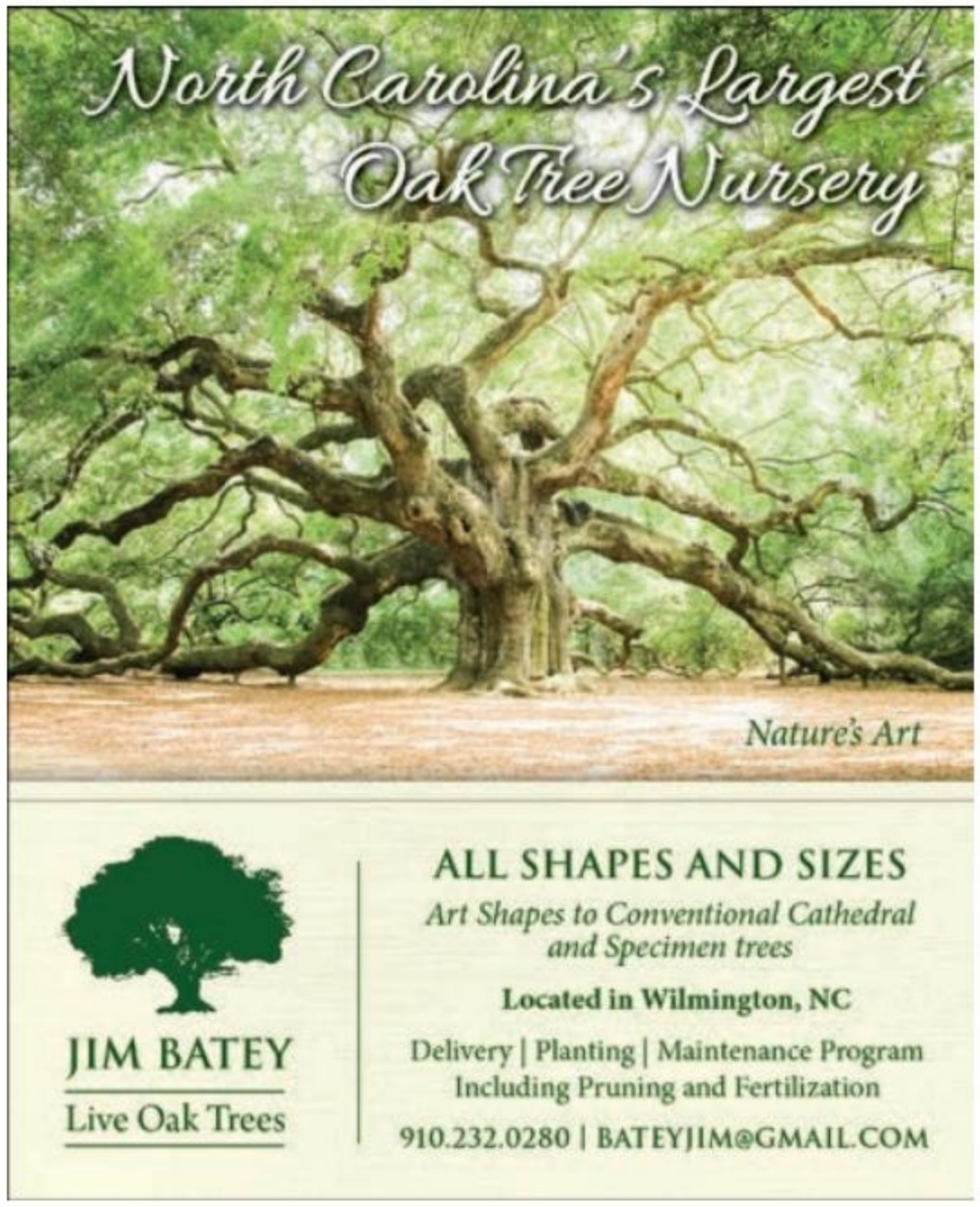
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The Monarchs of Autumn

In October's honeyed light, one learns to look for these exquisite travelers

STORY & PHOTOGRAPH BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

October at the coast: The tourists have left, and the fishermen have arrived. They line the long piers that jut into the ocean and spend days catching spot and blue — whatever's running. The blue avoid large shadows. They'll approach the pier, but stop short and swerve around the presence of the giant predator, which — with all those fishermen dangling their baited hooks from above — it most assuredly is.

By this time of year, the worst of hurricane season has passed, though the risk always lurks — one can spring up out of nowhere at any time — day by day, the chance lessens. The autumn sun drops; the Earth tilts. Of course, the days have been growing shorter since late June, but I never truly notice it until October, when the light grows dense and honeyed. I rush out most evenings just after the sun has slipped away because in October, it's followed by purple nimbus that seems to hover above the water and then slowly paints the sky.

Different tourists arrive. Tree swallows swoop in, chattering in the wax myrtles near the dunes. In a sudden rush, with an audible whoosh, they rise from the trees in a dark cloud cast forth like a sorcerer's spell. They swirl as one, pulsing and contracting in a display not unlike the bluefish.

On my evening walk last year, I came across a lone swallow. It was resting in the sand. It seemed strange, alone like that. Vulnerable. But it wasn't. Aware of my presence, it lifted back into the sky, absorbed into the flock.

***

I can't recall the first time I noticed the Monarchs in autumn — or even when I became aware of butterfly migration as something happening around me. I suppose it was when I started kayaking and was outside more. Occasionally a butterfly would stop on my bow for a bit, hitching a ride as I paddled across the water.

There's something magisterial about a Monarch in flight. Its wingbeats seem comparatively languid when compared to other butterflies. Their color is autumn light distilled to a saffron orange, the same vibrant color of the robes worn by Theravadan Buddhist monks. Their black-veined wings are reminiscent of the lead joinery between panes of stained glass. Sometimes two Monarchs fly past, clasped in their long mating, one seeming to carry the other through the air.

I suppose, from some back-of-the-mind place, I recalled a *National Geographic* photo of a woman covered in Monarchs, so I knew that many migrate to Mexico, but I did not know that the Monarchs often arrive

around the Day of the Dead, a time when many people believe the curtain is parted between the living world and the afterlife, and souls can travel freely. Some people believe these butterflies are their departed loved ones, transfigured.

Yet it wasn't until I stumbled upon Monarch roosts in coastal North Carolina that I truly understood their migration. Unlike swallows or bluefish, they don't travel together. Rather, they travel alone, at their own pace, but meet up in the evenings. No one knows why exactly. I've been fortunate enough to see six or seven roosts over the last 10 years, and I've gotten better at guessing when they'll arrive in the fall. You just have to be on the lookout. Learn what types of trees they like (cedars are desirable, as are wax myrtle) or whether you tend to see them when it's dry or after a long hard rain.

Since I've been looking, I've been fortunate enough to see hundreds, perhaps a thousand, huddled together, readying for a cold night. (Bald Head Island is a good place to look.) If the wind is still, you can hear the movement of their wings, like a rustle. If the wind is up, pay attention to how the butterflies can navigate through the current with visible precision, rather than being buffeted helplessly about.

If you spy a Monarch roost, you'll notice it looks like slow-motion flames dancing atop a wax myrtle or cedar. Then night falls, and the Monarchs close their wings, concealing their fire, showing only their drab underside, and all at once they vanish. To the casual walker, they appear as nothing more than dry leaves on a vine.

Last fall I saw a roost. The next evening, I returned to the same spot, hoping to see the Monarchs again, but they were long gone. Later, I read they routinely travel 50 miles a day, more if the wind is with them. Many travel over 3,000 miles to reach their overwintering grounds in Mexico. Miss them when they pass through, and you're flat out of luck until next year.

If you're like me, when you begin to find them, all your eyes will want to see are Monarchs. That leaf at the top of the cedar, no. The shadows beneath the bough, no. The motion across the field? Perhaps. Often, giddy with Monarch-mania, I am fooled, and laugh at my inexpert identification skills again and again. Yet, how wonderful that, in a single walk, a single afternoon of watching Monarchs, the brain trains itself to search for them everywhere, even where they cannot be, because, just maybe, there will be one someplace surprising, and the seer will experience joy and beauty once again.

Author Virginia Holman, a regular Salt *columnist, teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.*

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Recurring Dream

I stumble from a ladder,
mis-stepping through a rung –
preoccupied, peering up
to some lofty destination,
a change of venue for star-gazing.

During the thrill of ascension,
I loosen my grip, testing
if some trinity might rescue me.
And I fall, dream after dream,
each time I reach the REM –

stratum by stratum, through ice crystals.
Snagged in the belly of combed clouds
I release all I am into wind
free-falling as a piano tinkles
a light-hearted etude.

– *Sam Barbee*

Wilmington's Five Most Famous Ghosts

Tintype Photographs by Harry Taylor

"The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague.
Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?"
– Edgar Allan Poe

Wilmington is a city of ghosts. Floating down the cobbled streets of downtown, mistaken for a small and sudden autumn breeze. A glint of a face in the upstairs window of an old Queen Anne — the trickery of lace curtains. If you don't believe your eyes, you may believe your ears: Phantom footfalls, distant voices, creaks and groans of floors, doors and gates make for moments of private panic. Much mythology proclaims spirits are unable to cross water, making the "V" of the river and the ocean, which shapes our city, a veritable ghost trap.

Just as active than the ghosts themselves are the ghost *stories* of Wilmington. Though, beware, telling a ghost story is what activates the ghosts themselves. Who doesn't like a little attention? It's only natural to gravitate toward someone saying (or reading) your name.

Our writers chose five of the most famous Wilmington ghosts to channel into new tellings of the old legends. Folklore is passed down in many ways — poems, ballads, plays and narratives. We recommend reading by firelight. Perhaps aloud. Never alone.

With that in mind, we offer you an incantation for Emma Baldwin, wife of a dentist and shrewd judge of character (and purity) who, as the legend goes, inhabits her home on South 4th Street to this day, offering a dime to those she likes and a tooth to those she doesn't. A traditionalist, Emma is rumored to disapprove of unwed couples. For a true Southern busybody, one's work is never complete, even in the afterlife.

Across the street from Emma, and predating her death by 100 years, dwells Samuel Jocelyn, whom Colonial medicine failed, burying him alive in St. James Cemetery after a fall from his horse rendered him — to all appearances — to be dead. Later, in Victorian times, a bell tied to the dead man's finger could alert a gravedigger poised to listen to the life still stirring in him. Samuel, a budding spiritualist, in lieu of a bell, took to telepathy (or haunting) and, as the story goes, appeared to his best friend Alexander Hostler in the night, begging to be dug up. Tormented, Alexander did disinter his friend to find him turned over in his coffin, his fingers raw from scratching the lid, asphyxiated. Samuel's restless spirit is thought to haunt his early grave. Listen at the gate of St. James for the sounds of scratches. Our writer imagines what Samuel experienced that night he woke up . . . in a box.

Fort Fisher, the Confederate fort just south of Kure Beach, once a stronghold then the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, unsettles the bravest of spirit-seekers come nightfall. The ghost of Maj. Gen. William H.C. Whiting with his distinctive mustache and starred coat frequents the mounds he helped build, though soldiers have been heard and spotted, as well. Why does Whiting linger? He predicted the slaughter at Fort Fisher. His requests for support were ignored, and after three bloody days in January 1865, the fort fell. Wounded, Whiting was captured and held as a prisoner in New York for months before his death. His spirit longed to return home, and many years later his wife, Katherine, relented and relocated his bones to Oakdale Cemetery in Wilmington — which he may well also haunt — but his soul belongs to the fort and his men. Our writer visited Fort Fisher on a black night and put pen to page to give voice to Gen. Whiting.

Just north of town, Poplar Grove, the historic peanut plantation, has a host of ghosts in both the main house and the tenant farmhouses. One's family homestead proves a powerful magnet death cannot dim. Our writer pens the two tales on the most active members. The hubris of young David Foy, first-born son, echoes as a tangible energy in the house. Rebelling against his Unionist father, David joined the Confederate Army, but quickly died from typhus back at home, where, by many accounts, he still remains, bitterly stomping around the front office where plantation business was once conducted.

Nora Foy, the wife of David's brother J.T., may well have been haunted during her life. A tough woman, she bore four children who all died within their first days of life. She went on to be a postmaster — carrying a small pistol — and raised her nephew to inherit the plantation since her bloodline was halted. Nora is rumored to dwell in the children's bedroom upstairs, a benevolent, but protective force. Perhaps, in some netherworld, she is able to raise her babies, protecting them from what her Gullah Geechee maids may have called "haints" or "boo-hags," the evil pests of ghostly realms one also must be weary of in the haunted South.

Special Thanks: Poplar Grove Plantation, Springbrook Farms and Horsedrawn Tours, Hannah Elizabeth Smith, David Ray, Deb Furer, and the Ghost Walk of Old Wilmington.

Harry Taylor's ghost photographs are actually tintypes, a 19th-century wet plate collodion process with a direct positive image is made on a thin sheet of metal. Similar to daguerreotypes on silver, or ambrotypes on glass, tintypes were shot and developed in a studio or on site at Civil War-era fairs. Perfecting this medium for over ten years, Taylor travels with antique cameras and a mini photo lab in the back of his truck. Each tintype feels like a silent film, offering a transparency and movement lost to the instant digital world. Info: See Taylor's tintype show, "Between the Air and the Ether" through November 13 at the Burgwin-Wright House, 224 Market St, Wilmington. Get your portrait made in tintype Friday and Saturday, October 21 & 22nd, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. www.harrytaylorphoto.com.

The Incantation of Emma Baldwin

By Nicholas Gray

b. 1845–1909

Ping! – or *patter* –
Doth it matter?
Why, yes! – if you believe the chatter –
The coin will *ping!* – the teeth shall *patter* –

So, tell the story – how it goes –
So, tell the story, and *you will know* –

Emma Mitchell – was the daughter
Of a father loved and honored.
Emma then became the wife
Of a Baldwin man whose mouth she liked
Because the mouths he worked so much
Were just the mouths that kept her plus.
But then one day –
One tooth too much –
Her body-soul had seen – *too much* –
That honest day – 1909 –
Of natural causes she did die.
And so, next day, without a sound,
Her grave was dug down pound for pound.
Emma, *Emma!* – is the ghost
Whom we have come to trust the most
Because she guides us toward the truth
And judges rightly – charm'd or uncouth?

If you be a person good,
A *ping!* will chime upon our wood,
And show the face of Franklin R.
To tell us what your values are.
If you be a person best,
Ping! – *ping!* – *ping!* – a treasure chest!

But if you be a person bad,
The *patter* of a tooth will land,
A rotten, yellowed, dark display
To tell us of your deep decay.
On banister or window sill,
Mouthful of teeth will come to fill.

A dime is worth but mere ten cents
Until she shows us her sixth sense
Head up, no shine, don't ever spend it.
Be pleased Emma has found you splendid.

A tooth is worth much more than that,
More than your suit,
More than your hat,
Because it's told us that you're scat,
And scat doth stink
Whereev' you're at.

Clawing at the Ether

The Last Regrets of Samuel Jocelyn

b. 1787–1810

By Nicholas Gray

[Lights up reveal a man on stage alone. His eyes open.]

SAMUEL: How now, have I come here — into this box? Sense, there is none. It is a coffin, shut with nails, top'd with mud. *[He begins to panic]*

Whoa, now! — Samuel — slow down your breath. *Woe!* Evermore, I talked too much, I thought too much. Surely some gravedigger hears my howl! Or you, Alexander. We were Jonathan and David, from the book of my namesake. Recall our passions — for the *unknown* — we did oath whoever left first to tread the Great Beyond did promise to return to truth-tell from the other side.

Xandy, I fear I fail this oath, for I know not rightly if, presently, I live or die. So, is Death . . . to doubt oneself? Or is it such exactly thus: Though blood stills, my mind remains? *Nay! – damn my doubt.* Surely the tatter of my burial dress — my desperate fingers scratching to the bone — this hideous moment, is no illusion.

My father, with his lieutenant, gavel-pounded to send me six under — you should have cried, "Nay! I see life in him!" *Recall!* We were near conjoined. Were that indeed the case, I could use an organ now, one extra breath, one heartbeat might save me. Recall our charm with cards and dice, when paired together, our purse ever doubled. Recall the only thing we cussed on — my horse, you despised riding.

Upon my steed, madly did I ride. *Why? oh, Why! Why? Oh Why! Ah, Mary Ann.* We had a spat — not the first — but you know that, eight months of married unbliss. Recall that cold night, I rode off into the swamp. Something did spook my steady steed. Twas it dumb stump? A dumb snake — the rattle of a canebrake?

Ah!, now one thing does rise to me'mry. *Memory!* — you trial'd witch, was it you who threw me? As my corpse submerged, pulse submitting to the freeze, another witch did appear — she stole me elsewhere, swamp water becoming the River Styx. I begged to be heard. I clawed at the ether. She granted me return, but only to this pale resting place.

Am I now just desperately mad? 'Cause now Death doth take my last breath. My strength crushed by this coffin lid — I budge it nil. I have three words for you, my Xandy. But breath escapes. Please . . . *dig me up.*

[Lights out]

Nicholas Gray is the playwright of another ghost story, "The Dying Words of Edison Strange."

Falling Place

The Lament of Major General William H.C. Whiting, C.S.A.

b. 1824–1865

By John Wolfe

One black night at Fort Fisher, under the gnarled skeletal limbs of the live oak, I sat down to listen. I heard the whispers of wind in the grass and the mournful monotony of cicadas and I could just make out a muttering man's voice:

"Now I return to my falling-place. Curse that January day when the warships plagued the horizon like swarms of black flies and the humid air was choked with smoke and the screams of my men dying in the marsh.

To me, my fate was no surprise; I knew when I first greeted Colonel Lamb at Fisher's gates. His face grew grey when I told him we were to be sacrificed. How fitting for a lamb. But that we would be abandoned *by our own* — overwhelmed at the river's mouth by the near-whole of the Union navy — how could I have known *that?* You malaria-riddled bastard, Bragg! The best Confederate general the Union army ever had. So close — so close! He ordered his men to sit on their muskets at Sugarloaf. And that meddling politician Davis ignored me to the last.

Bullets fell me as I grappled with the bearer of the Union flag. Bullets laid me supine in the sand when I refused surrender.

Blood! Blood was spilled upon this sand.

Cactus spines impaled our flesh.

Bones decayed in the needlegrass.

The mosquitoes who gorged on lifeless blood in their tireless pursuit of the living essence. Their descendants remember. I cannot forget nineteen hundred brave boys — Carolinians all — now a blurred mirage on this inhospitable spit of sand, this desolate end of the earth surrounded by the turquoise sea from which Death arrived, on white ships, wearing blue. *Where are you now, my boys?*

We are all lambs now. War, the great equalizer. Death, the greatest equalizer of all. The ghosts of brave men roam, lost. At least I have my dear Katherine. We rest, together at last, at Oakdale in the shade of a magnolia whose rotted blossoms blanket our bed. A mottled granite shield marks our bones.

But rest I can't. I am doomed to guard this windy shore, eyes cast forever to the North.

But — who is *this?* Hallo! Who intrudes on these black grounds? Another of my lost lambs or a damn Yankee? Closer now and let me see the color of your coat."

John Wolfe is a North Carolina essayist and spinner of local lore.

Homecoming

David Hiram Foy b. 1840–1862

By Nan Graham

Tramp . . . tramp . . . tramp . . . the mysterious sound of heavy boots trudging slowly over wide plank floors echoes in the room. A low, moaning voice calls "David . . . Daaa-vid." A feeling of phantom hands tightening slowly around one's throat. Guests, docents and staff have reported these ghostly encounters at Poplar Grove Plantation. Don't *all* respectable Southern plantations have at least one resident ghost?

***

David Foy could never envision himself running Poplar Grove, the peanut and sweet potato plantation that he, as first-born, was destined to do. The 21-year-old son, University of North Carolina class of 1861, AB diploma in hand, rode his dapple gray home for his father's funeral with the last letter he received from him tucked in his coat pocket. The letter's closing words read, "Union forever!" David thought of his father hunched under the oil lamp, shuffling through endless paperwork.

Tensions were high. David defied his father's wishes, engaged a local man to oversee Poplar Grove and left to join his classmates in the Confederate cavalry. The frenzy of youthful enlistment-fever had David, and so many other testosterone-driven young men, in its grips. He believed it his duty to serve his South in the "Great Adventure." A slim, hot-tempered man, David Foy cut a dashing figure astride his horse, as he galloped off to the training camp outside Wilmington.

The road to glory was not to be.

Struck down by typhus in the spring of 1862, only three months and five days after he joined the Confederate camp — where he likely contracted the insect-borne illness — David never saw a battle, much less combat. He returned home to to recuperate from the merciless disease, nursed by his ailing mother on a cot in the back parlor, only steps across from the despised plantation office that haunted him. Poplar Grove . . . the life he wanted so desperately to escape.

For weeks he lingered, plagued by chills, fever and unable to eat more than spoonfuls of broth. His cot was moved to the window parlor in hopes the lush herb garden and bustling stable workers would inspire him to recover. At dusk on a humid June evening, the young man breathed his last.

David, perhaps feeling cheated of his military dream and victory for his cause, still roams the family home. His chilling presence seems especially to lurk around the office where plantation business was handled for 75 years.

Tramp . . . tramp . . . tramp . . . of David's boots as he stomps to the office. Can the disillusioned first-born, trapped by duty, be trying to leave Poplar Grove once and for all? Communicating with strangers his longing for adventure outside the routine of the fields and crops and slaves? It is his Papa's voice calling him home, his dying words ringing out, "Daaa...vid, Daaa-vid" that some have heard?

All I can tell you is that recent paranormal experts tested the office and reported that the sensitive needle on the K-II Electro-Magnetic Field Detector moves from the normal yellow scale in the half-moon meter to the far-right, *in the red*.

Ghosts? Maybe. Something? Definitely.

The Blue Door

Sarah Eleanora (Nora) Dozier Foy b. 1850–1923

By Nan Graham

The low soft voice settled over the room like the evening dark.

"We Papa een heaben,
Leh ebrybody hona you nyame
Cause you da holy.

Juba knelt by Nora's beside, praying. She glanced at the restless mother-to-be and saw she was finally drifting into sleep. She loved this ailing woman and barely felt the discomfort of another late night. Hands folded in prayer, she continued in her Gullah language. She knew The Lord's Prayer in English, too. It felt more powerful in the strange patois she had heard since babyhood:

". . . Leh we don't hab haad test when Satan try we. Keep we from e ebil. Amen."

Juba rose and sat in the rocking chair near the window in the nursery. The chair that had held so many mothers and little ones for the last three generations. She watched the sleeping woman with her mountainous belly.

Poor Nora Dozier Foy, mistress of the Poplar Grove Plantation, was nearing her "borning time," the fourth birth in nine years. First a girl, then two baby boys . . . all born with howling voices that seemed to predict robust infants. Then mysteriously . . . within hours . . . silent and still. Nora's husband J.T. had a bed moved into the nursery as a good omen.

As a precaution, Juba put the broom by the head of the bed. One Gullah apparition, the dreaded Boo Hag, was known to crouch on the sleeper's chest to steal his skin, causing him restless nights. Much as cats were rumored to suck the breath out of a sleeping baby, the Boo Hag could suck the life out of the sleeper. A compulsive creature, the Boo Hag is compelled to count every single straw in a broom or hole in a sieve. For extra measure, Juba tucked a carefully folded piece of newspaper into the toe of Miz Nora's shoe. Similarly, "haints" were obliged to stop and read single every word. The process took so long, (the meticulous haints were notoriously slow counters and readers) it would be dawn before the counts were completed. At daylight, the unsuccessful Boo Hag would vanish to find another skin to inhabit.

Nora took Juba's advice and convinced J.T. to paint the back door, the porch ceiling and nursery windowsills light blue. "Cause that color will guarantee a boy child," Juba promised. She never mentioned the real reason. Every Gullah knows evil spirits will never cross water, so windows, doors and ceilings painted sky or indigo color would surely fool the demons.

Baby boy Foy, after twenty six hours of agonizing labor, lived only three hours before he lost his breath.

"My Ebo!" Juba chanted over and over, holding the now still baby. Ebo means "Little One" in English. Nora's grief was overwhelming, she would not have another pregnancy. Later, she would adopt and raise her nephew to be their heir.

At Poplar Grove Plantation, the children's room is inhabited by at least one maternal presence. If you walk up softly, you may see that the rocking chair by the window rocking slowly back and forth, back and forth with a low rhythmic creak.

Nan Graham, local NPR commentator since 1995, is a long-time admirer of ghost stories and believer in haints. Her front door is painted Gullah Blue.

The Walkabout

In beautiful Edenton, history lives and life moves on Sambo time

By Jim Moriarty · Photographs by Kip Shaw

Sambo Dixon wraps his hands around the full quiver of his historic peacock's tail feathers and repositions the bird to a lookout perch at the top of the garden cupola next to his Edenton house, Beverly Hall. A place for everything and everything in its place. The bird registers its objection with a guttural squawk about half an octave above Harpo Marx's horn. This was our starter's pistol.

Trailing behind Dixon on a speed walking tour of Edenton leaves one feeling a bit like the pig at the end of the Michael J. Fox's leash on a stroll through Grady in *Doc Hollywood*. There's not a soul, from mayor to roofer, banker to gardener, who does not greet Edenton's best-known lawyer when they see him on the sidewalk with his white hair, matching milky opaque eyeglass frames, sockless loafers and khaki slacks. There's a certain familiarity in a small town attached to someone whose family, on one side or the other, has lived in the same house since 1820.

Dixon is a country lawyer who does a little bit of everything but concentrates on capital cases. His law office is behind Beverly Hall in a building once occupied by slaves. It was his grandfather, Richard Dillard Dixon's, law office, too. A superior court judge, the elder Dixon was appointed by President Harry Truman to assist as an alternate judge in the Nuremberg tribunals. He tried four cases, including the so-called Doctors' trial of 23 Nazis. Chief among them was Hitler's personal physician, Karl Brandt.

Folks scoop up history in Edenton the way most towns recycle plastic. They did it when the old cotton mill closed, turning it into condos and the blocks of workers' homes into cozy bungalows. Near the peacock's cupola — the birds' lineage, spiritually if not directly, runs back a hundred years itself — is an outbuilding Dixon found in Chapanoke, a tiny Perquimans County town, and moved to Beverly Hall as if it was a rusty old Dodge pickup on blocks. He rescued the 18th century house from demolition. "They were going to burn it," he says as if the prospect was as distasteful to him as drowning puppies.

Dixon stops in front of Beverly Hall as a car rattles down King Street. "That guy, his name is James Bond," he says, pointing at the car bouncing toward Broad Street, the town's central business district. "His father buried guns under a church in Edenton during the Civil War." A mental calculator does a mathematical whirligig and Dixon adds that Bond's father had been a boy in the 1860s and that Bond, no youngster himself, was a late-in-life baby. We cross King and walk right into Pembroke Hall, a Greek-Revival home on the National Register of Historic Places built in the early 1800s. It's OK. Dixon was one of the people who pooled the resources necessary to save it. He runs through the sequence of owners like a menu for Chinese food. Workmen are busy getting it ready for the new owner and pay little attention to Dixon, who wants to show off the unobstructed view from the back porches. "It has protective covenants on it," he says of the vista of Edenton Bay. "There'll never be anything built over there."

We cut through Pembroke Hall's expansive backyard with its ghosts of grand parties past, skip down a few cement stairs and make for the lighthouse beside the small in-town harbor. The wind is blowing off the bay, and it's hard to catch every word from two strides behind. "Ten-year preservation project," he says. Then I hear: "It sat at the mouth of the Roanoke River." There's

something about 1886, which barely qualifies as old in Edenton. "It's called a screw pile lighthouse because they screwed these things into the sound floor." We climb up the twisting staircase to the top and duck through an opening onto a tiny catwalk. A workman follows us. He doesn't want anyone falling through the hole in the floor. Dixon assures him of our agility. "Here's my favorite part," he says. "We've got the fresnel lens now. We'll put that back in, hopefully sooner rather than later." Dixon points across the bay. "That's Queen Anne's Creek and that's Pembroke Creek. Right across Albemarle Sound is where they think the Lost Colony went. You been following that?" It's known as Site X, discovered after an X-ray examination of a watercolor map drawn by Gov. John White in 1585 indicated the possibility of the existence of the inland location.

And we're off again, walking down the salvaged parts of the old Chowan River Bridge, cut into sections and made into a breakwater, creating a small sheltered port for boats traveling up and down the Intracoastal Waterway. Behind the lighthouse is the old Edenton Ice Company building. John Conger Glover, formerly of Harris Wholesale Inc., wants to turn what had been his grandfather's obsolete business into a modern brewpub. "We have a lot of young families now, which is a rarity in eastern North Carolina," Dixon says.

He explains how even by the late 1700s, the bay was already too shallow to accommodate the larger ships. A hurricane in 1795 would close the ocean inlet completely and Edenton would stay forever small. "My crowd," is the way Dixon singles out his ancestors. One of them, William Badham Jr., another lawyer, formed the Edenton Bell Battery. "They melted down the church bells and made them into cannons. Captured at the Battle of Town Creek. (One of them, anyway.) They weren't found for another 125 years. You don't see many bronze cannons," he says.

The six-pounder is named Edenton, the 12-pounder St. Paul. The first was found on display at the Shiloh National Military Park and the second at Old Fort Niagara. They're positioned outside the Barker House, the town's visitor's center. Dixon climbs the stairs. "Hey, how you doin'?" he says to a stranger coming out, the first person he's seen that he doesn't know. "First political activity by women in America," he says of the Edenton Tea Party of 1774. "This was the lady. This was her house." Like the lighthouse, Penelope Barker's home was moved from its original location two blocks north to the spiffy spot on the water it occupies now. Outside there are more cannon. "These were brought over by a Frenchman on something called the Holy Heart of Jesus (Coeur de Saint Jésus) and nobody would pay for them so he got mad and sunk the ship. At some point they went out and pulled them up. They tried to shoot them during the Civil War when the Northern troops were coming in, and they said it was more dangerous to stand behind them than to stand in front of them." He points to the scraggly cluster of cypress in the water a few yards away. "That's the dram tree. Ships coming in would bring West Indian rum and put it in a little bottle and

ships going out would make a toast," he says.

We head toward the Colonial green by way of the path along the water. Two men are fishing. From a distance it looks like all they've caught are a couple of missionaries in white shirts and dark ties. Dixon even loves the water in Edenton. "It's fresh water, too," he says. "No barnacles. No sharks. No jellyfish." He asks the men with the poles if they've caught anything.

"A mess of white perch," one replies.

"Good enough to eat?"

"Oh, yeah."

We cross the street and Dixon knocks on the side door of the house called Homestead. Frances Inglis tells us to come in. While her voice has the quaver of time and her frame is slight, she still has the stamina to command a division of volunteers in straw hats and gardening gloves armed with hand trowels to maintain the grounds at the Cupola House. Inglis played a central role in saving the Jacobean-design house, a National Historic Landmark built in 1758 and the first community-inspired historic preservation in the state of North Carolina. We take a quick tour of Homestead and its double porches. "See through and breeze through," she says. On a table sits a signed letter from Orville Wright, framed along with a piece of fabric. The note, with handwritten corrections, reads:

As a token of my appreciation of your courtesy in surrendering a piece which you had of our 1905 plane, I present to you two pieces of the "Kitty Hawk" which flew at Kill Devil Hills on December 17, 1903.

I authenticate the above pieces as genuine parts of the original "Kitty Hawk," plane. They are from parts broken when the plane, while standing on the ground, was overturned by the wind after the fourth flight of the day.

Inglis explains her family had a beach house at Nags Head. "My father had a little canvas canoe. He used to paddle up from the cottage to the sight of the Wright brothers. They had abandoned the place. He gathered up this thing that was a wing tip of the 1902 glider. He had parts of the 1905 plane, the first one to fly two people."

Next to the Wright brothers table is a wooden chest. On top of the chest is a woven basket of African design, made in the 1850s. The small trunk underneath is the camp chest of Tristrim Lowther Skinner — one of Inglis' crowd. Inside are his sash, insignia, epaulets and a belt drawn in because he was losing weight. He was killed in 1862 and when she's asked where, Inglis replies, "Mechanicsville," in a voice so soft it's as if the news just arrived. "Trim, they called him," she says. The Skinner family papers, including letters home from the battlefield, are in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Outside Homestead, we race past a large monument. "This is the Joseph Hewes Memorial. He was great friends with John Paul Jones. That's about him," Dixon says with a sweep of his hand. At the other end of the green we hop up the steps and enter the front door of the Chowan County Courthouse, a National Historic Landmark built in 1767, and the oldest active courthouse in North Carolina. The state Supreme Court still convenes there for ceremonial occasions. "They sit up there on those hard, terrible benches, but they love coming here," Dixon says. Inside, there's a welcoming committee of two, Judy Chilcoat and Carolyn Owens. One of the ladies taught Sambo Dixon math. He apologizes for that less than stellar bit of history. We go upstairs to the central window facing the green below. "When they ratified the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Secession, they read them out of this window to the people down below. We had a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a signer of the Constitution and a person on the first Supreme Court from here," says Dixon.

Behind the courthouse we pass the empty jail building, oldest in the state. Dixon wonders out loud what it might be repurposed for. Perhaps something

servicing the nearby 60-room boutique hotel planned for the old Hotel Hinton, a 20th century testimonial to utilitarian architecture already upgraded once into county government offices and then downgraded into deserted. We skip onto Broad Street, a small commercial district so 1950s if you didn't see Michael J. Fox with his pig, you might see him screeching by in his DeLorean. Dixon points out the bank. "The story I've always heard," he says, "is that during the Depression, there was going to be a run on the bank, so a bunch of local folks went to the mint and got a bunch of one dollar bills and put hundred dollar bills on top and said the bank was safe and it wasn't."

Next is St. Paul's Episcopal Church, organized in the Vestry Act of 1701. "That's all my crowd," Dixon says with a gesture so expansive it's as if the gravestones were acres of corn with too many ears to pick just one. "I've got the pew rent books at home from the 1840s. I've got 10 or 11 generations buried in this church." We walk inside and he looks around at the altar and the balconies. "Every part of my life would begin and end here," he says.

Someone is trimming hedges as we leave. There are vines intertwined with the shrubs, and Dixon offers advice. "Pull them out like this," he says. "Don't break them. Put newspaper around them and spray them with Roundup. It goes back to the root and kills them." Perhaps the only endangered roots in Chowan County.

"These are 1900s houses. That's the Conger House. It's got a ballroom," Dixon says as we march down Church Street. We walk up to the back door of a small house. It belongs to Daryl Adachi, who moved to Edenton after getting chased out of his renovated Vermont schoolhouse by cold winters a decade or so ago. He head-hunts for financial services companies from his computer.

"This is my where-in-the-world-have-you-been room," says Adachi. "I've got France and Italy and England and Mexico and China." There is a dead icons room with black and white photography of the Kennedys, Elvis, Dr. King and Marilyn. In another room there's a wall for his alma mater, Notre Dame. And an Asian room. "I lived in Hong Kong and Japan for a while," he says. "I subscribe to the Sambo Dixon theory of interior decoration — fill every piece of wall, fill every single table. Make sure there is no space that's left untouched."

Robert Beasley is back in town, too. He bought the Granville Queen Inn in June of last year and if it's possible to give the impression of profound gentleness in a single meeting, Beasley is your guy. Born in Edenton, he grew up in nearby Tyner, attended North Carolina A&T and had a career in business services in the D.C. area. "My grandmother, Vashti Twine, worked for one of the wealthiest ladies in Chowan County, Eliza Elliott. I would go with her some days in the summer when she went to the house to pick the vegetables or dust the house because the lady was always traveling. She had this mansion and all these beautiful things. It did something to me, going with her and having an appreciation for the finer things." The appreciation found expression in the Granville.

On our way back to Beverly Hall, we cut through the engineering marvel of Wessington, the 1850s Georgian mansion next door. Purchased by Richard Douglas, from Charlottesville, Virginia, it has a geothermal power plant that looks like the guts of a nuclear submarine, or what one imagines the guts of a nuclear submarine might look like.

We come full circle in Dixon's living room. "The house was built as State Bank of North Carolina in 1810," he says. "They have all this early interior security. There are iron bars that go across the windows at night. Here's the vault. The two burn marks? The way it stopped being a bank was the teller embezzled all the money, put the books on the floor, set them on fire. There was a run on the bank. He ran out in the back yard and shot himself, but people were so angry they took him down to the courthouse and tried him after he was dead and hung him on the green."

Dixon points out the Civil War camp chest belonging to William Badham — his crowd. There's a set of dueling pistols and a silver service. A book by James Iredell, Edenton's member of the first Supremes, is in a library full of books with old notes and pressed flowers inside. "You never know what you're gong to find in them," he says.

Dixon looks at his watch. "I got to go see a guy in jail about a murder."

Photos of Edenton by Kip Shaw accompanying this article can be found in Hospitality, Edenton Style *to be published in November by Pembroke Bay Press, 2333 Locust Grove Road, Edenton, NC 27932.*

Devilishly Good Desserts

Why should neighborhood ghosts and goblins get all the treats?

By Jason Frye · Photographs by Andrew Sherman

As a kid, two days stood out for a candy-binge-eating bonanza: Easter (why? we'll never know) and Halloween. But now I'm an adult, and the craving for Cadbury Eggs or Fun-Size candy bars is behind me. My palate has expanded (I won't say it's more sophisticated because I still love a log of cookie dough) and refined. Those sweets of my childhood and the twice-yearly gluttonous holiday sugar orgies have given way to simply, dessert. Like a civilized person.

I'll have a cheese course for dessert or even just an after-dinner drink, but still nothing satisfies like something sweet, rich and at least a little decadent. Oh, and since I am a grownup, something a little boozy ain't half bad either.

So where do I turn for dessert? Where should you look to get your fill of sweets? I talked with a trio of dessert mavens about some most excellent treats us grownups can enjoy this Halloween. No costume required.

Amanda Corbett,

Pastry Chef, Circa Restaurant Group: Brasserie du Soleil, Osteria Cicchetti, Circa 1922 and Boca Bay

Amanda Corbett makes my absolute favorite dessert in Wilmington (and maybe all of the world): the pot de crème at Brasserie du Soleil. Rich chocolate, the perfect texture, an appropriate portion size, this is my go-to.

"My philosophy when it comes to desserts for adults is 'Not too sweet,'" says Corbett. "That's why I often incorporate a pinch of salt in my recipes, for balance."

Corbett will go savory on a dessert, opting for the cheese plate from time to time. "The thought of replacing an amazing slice of Circa 1922's seven layer chocolate cake with a plate of cheese may be a faux pas for some," says Corbett, "but I dare you to try Osteria Cicchetti's crumbly, creamy Danish blue cheese with orange honey and lavash crackers paired with a cabernet."

Challenge accepted, but on to the sweets.

"My current favorite is my newest addition to Osteria Cicchetti's menu: the peanut butter cake. I'm talking layers of smooth chocolate ganache, creamy peanut butter mousse, roasted peanuts and salted caramels. I use almond flour, so it's gluten free, plus the flour adds some nuttiness. I like pairing it with an aged port wine; it's like a play on the classic PB&J."

Corbett shares a family recipe with *Salt*, a childhood favorite and holiday classic: peanut brittle.

"My grandmother used to make a huge batch to give out on the holidays, and watching my mother and grandmother cook and share their love for others through food sparked a flame in me." Find this treat atop a Brasserie mini or make it at home.

Peanut Brittle

Roast 1 pound of shelled peanuts in your oven for five minutes, until warm to the touch. Stir 2 tablespoons soft butter and 1/2 teaspoon baking soda with peanuts until butter is melted. Set aside. Combine 1/2 cup water, 2 cups granulated sugar, 1 1/2 cups corn syrup and 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, cooking until golden brown.

Once syrup is golden brown, pour over peanuts. Stir once, quickly pour mixture in a thin layer onto a cookie sheet. Allow to set about 20 minutes, then break apart by hand.

Kathy Rayle

Bakla-Vavoom

"My Greek grandmother — who I'm named after — lived with us when I was growing up, and she made the most incredible Greek pastries," says Kathy Rayle, owner of the aptly named Bakla-Vavoom. "Baklava was my favorite, and I've never, not even once, enjoyed a baklava the way I enjoyed hers."

Baklava is so simple — phyllo dough, butter, nuts, honey syrup — that it's hard to get right. Rayle has it nailed. She's been making baklava for 15 years, and every time a tray of it appears at a party, I surreptitiously eat as much of it as I can.

"A good baklava is about contrasting textures. The top layers of phyllo are crunchy and the bottom portion moist from the syrup," she says. "Although it's a sweet dessert, I enjoy a bit of a savory note for balance."

But a great baklava, like the one that inspires Rayle, is about proportion. Like a good party, too many nuts and too little phyllo and it falls apart; too much phyllo and too few nuts and it's doughy.

"Ultimately I try to recreate the lingering taste that my grandmother's baklava had. I can only hope mine comes close."

Rayle's take on baklava is both traditional — like her grandmother's — and totally new. As in vegan. She removes the butter and honey, replaces them with similar vegan ingredients, and makes a batch that sells like crazy at Tidal Creek Co-Op. Her traditional batch sells too; you can buy directly from her, from a handful of Harris Teeter stores or at The District.

Like any good cook, she's passing her love along, and her 10-year old daughter, Ava, has started her own YouTube cooking show ("Cool Classic Cooking," check it out). I sampled one of Ava's mini-pumpkin pies recently and she's on the right track.

"I only cook desserts on my show," Ava says. Seems like we've come to the right place.

Amanda Benoit

Surf House Oyster Bar & Surf Camp

"I have a really bad sweet tooth," says Amanda Benoit, pastry chef at Surf House in Carolina Beach. "I mean, practically the only thing I eat is dessert."

Which explains why her dessert menu and I became such fast friends.

Her chocolate bar — a flourless torte with caramel, bourbon sugar and vanilla ice cream — is the perfect fix for a sugar-junkie, but so is her pecan pie (which probably has a splash of bourbon in it; this is, after all, a list of treats for grown ups) and her key lime pie and her ice cream.

"I'm moving into my fall/winter desserts in October," says Benoit.

That means hot chocolate made the old-fashioned way: real chocolate (she prefers Valrhona), heavy cream and milk. Oh, and mint or cayenne pepper or a splash of something tipsy. Like all creative types, she's got to switch things up — stretch and challenge — to keep it inspired.

Benoit likes to experiment and encourages home cooks to play, try a recipe, use a new ingredient — like Old Grand-Dad bourbon, which she uses for the lingering vanilla notes — "Make something you've never had before."

"What would basil ice cream be like? How can I use thyme? Would lavender bring some balance to this dish? Those are questions I ask and things I try," says Benoit, who also enjoys the sweet-savory paradox, but isn't going to deprive her need-for-sweets. "I mean, I'm not into the $24 cheese plate — that's not dessert — but savory can really set off the sweet."

HISTORIC WILMINGTON FOUNDATION, INC.
BERGEN-CARPENDER HOUSE
1924
JAMES B. LYNCH, ARCHITECT
PRAIRIE STYLE HOUSE BUILT FOR WALTER JOHN BERGEN (1859-1931). SECRETARY OF ALEXANDER SPRUNT & SONS, COTTON BROKERS; AND WIFE, MARY MADDEN (1867-1947), NATIVES OF NEW YORK. PURCHASED IN 1947 BY EDWIN ROBINSON CARPENDER (1882-1965), NATIVE OF NEW JERSEY, ESTATE AGENT; AND WIFE, ELOVINE TYRRELL BURRUSS (1885-1968), WILMINGTON NATIVE AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST. INHERITED BY DAUGHTER, DAME CATHARINE C. CARPENDER k.m., CIVIC LEADER.
HISTORIC WILMINGTON FOUNDATION, INC.

What a Dame!

The spirited matriarch of the Dames Inn

By Mark Holmberg · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

1519

If central casting searched for a haunted house in Wilmington, 1519 Princess St. likely would not jump out and grab them.

The yard is pristine and invites the soul to come rest on the arched veranda. There's not one sag in the 92-year-old roofline and nary a skewed shutter waiting to bang in the breeze. The buff brick structure is tight and true. The basement is dry and happy, and the attic wouldn't scare a child.

Inside this bright and airy Prairie-style home, the floors don't creak and the furnace won't groan, although, from time to time, "you have to down and kick it in the right spot," says Patricia Peters. "Pat" is the current owner of the Dames Inn, although, truth be told, the home owns her.

"I am possessed," she admits with a wry, Martha Stewart-like smile. A couple of hours with her inside this amazingly original and personally decorated house proves just how true this is.

The 1924 home, built for Walter Bergen, secretary to mercantile magnate Alexander Sprunt, has become known as a gently haunted inn, thanks to Peters' possession. It's listed among the historic haunts of the Port City. Plenty of ghost hunters have combed through it, one of them posting a YouTube video with recorded ghostly voices, laughter and orbs.

"Yes, it is well and truly occupied by a spirit," says Bonnie Sandera, a local medium, shamanic healer and hypnotist with Cape Fear RIP (Researchers Investigating the Paranormal).

"She's kind of a trickster," Sandera says of the spirit. "A good sense of humor. She's very attracted to the property, and she's very protective of Pat."

She, of course, is The Dame of Wilmington, Catharine Carpender, a delightfully complex and some might say vexing woman known for strong drink and matching language who died at the age of 85 in the upstairs master bedroom in 2000.

That's when Peters, a Jersey girl, arrived on the scene by way of Nevada en route to Australia — of all things. Her daughter was attending UNC Wilmington and they were looking for a small investment house so her daughter would have a place to stay.

They happened upon a listing at 15th and Princess.

"My daughter said, 'That looks like the house from "Psycho."' For grins and giggles I called the Realtor," Peters recalls, laughing.

It was 5,000 square feet — twice the size of what she wanted. But the price was amazingly affordable. And while she was walking through the house, she noticed index cards with the word "stay" written on them, indicating which furnishings would stay with the house. While she was in the dining room, standing right where the grand dame of the house would sit, a "stay" card affixed to the chandelier "flies off and lands on my foot," recalls Peters.

That fateful card — which is now framed and sitting on the dining room mantle — sealed the deal. But not for her daughter.

"She told me, 'I'm not living in that thing,'" Peters says. "So, she moved to Florida."

Peters and her husband bought the house, but moved to Australia, and the house sat mostly empty from 2001 to 2009.

When Peters, who had worked as a researcher for a group of authors, returned to Wilmington, she got to work running down the story of her home.

As the story of Dame Carpender began unfolding in the most haunting and addictive way, the Dame herself began reaching out to her, Peters says as we tour the house. Much of the house remains exactly as it was when Walter and Mary Bergen first turned the key, right down to the wallpaper. (Dragons in the dining room, oh my!)

The Dame likes it that way, Peters says with a knowing nod.

If Peters tried to use a wall color the Dame didn't like, "she'd get a little cranky" and pictures would fall off the wall or a painting ladder would mysteriously tumble.

One time she came downstairs to find "all the curtains had fallen down."

She soon learned to ask, "Do you like this?" when proposing even the most subtle change.

Peters also learned the Dame was quite particular about who came into her home. "She pushed my sister-in-law down," she says, "but she deserved it."

Another time, a new remodeling worker came to the front door and immediately "the attic door slams," Peters says. "I told him, 'You've got to go.'"

But the attic door didn't budge when a different worker arrived. Peters could feel the Dame smiling when he told her he remembered the house from his youth, saying, "I'd ride my bike to school and see the lovely lady on the porch."

Was Catharine Carpender lovely? Peters thinks so.

Photos indicate a rather serious and tough woman, known to be as absolutely dedicated to her liberal causes as she was to her champion Scottish terriers. At one point, Peters believes, the Dame had as many as 15 dogs living in the house.

Reportedly, there was a sign at the front door: "This house is for the comfort of my dogs. If you don't like it, you may leave."

The sometimes-salty Dame used even more potent language when the police or anyone else tried to stop her from holding controversial interracial meetings or theatrical plays in her home.

The wealthy Dame had been on a mission ever since a childhood sickness derailed plans for a higher education. The Red Cross, the Naval Affairs Committee, Elderhaus, the Human Relations Council, violence prevention, the restoration of Buddhist temples in far-flung places, anything that could improve the tenor of human harmony got the full and furious attention of this hard-smoking, hard-drinking globe-trotter.

She was knighted by the Sovereign and Military Order of Malta for relentless dedication to a medical clinic in Sicily, giving her the title of Dame. The U.S. Navy also awarded her its Meritorious Public Service Award.

The Dame famously met Mother Teresa when she helped bring the legendary humanitarian to UNC Wilmington in 1975 to receive the Albert Schweitzer International Humanities Award, Peters says, proudly displaying the photograph of their meeting.

The home has so many of the Dame's history and personal touches, from her writings and her own typed dossier to the bedside buzzer she would press to summon her almost lifelong butler, James. Peters can picture the long-suffering James, hearing the buzzer in the basement, his retreat, "to get in enough sauce to deal with her."

According to legend, the Dame was furious with the elderly James for getting struck and killed by a car while walking nearby. He was supposed to be there till the end!

Peters absolutely cherishes the grand complexities and contrasts of her

THE DAMES INN
Hardee's
Trick or Treat
Eat Drink & Be Scary
Boo
Scarrots

Ship Owners & Agents
Seamen Needed

ghost, the sweeping benevolence and philanthropy harmonizing with untamed moments like cursing the cops and mashing her servant's bell while "smoking like a freight train" with a Dewar's Scotch in hand. And on the rocks, mind you! When the power went out and the Dame had to suffer through her Dewar's without ice, Peters says, a generator was installed the next day.

Such is the detail Peters has woven into the Dames Inn.

While gently and carefully remodeling the kitchen, she transformed the pantry into a world-class bar in honor of the Dame's love of a lengthy cocktail hour.

"As soon as we put this in the lights started blowing up," Peters says as we linger at the bar. "She loves this space!"

Guests who don't properly toast the Dame have been known to hear the wine goblets tinkling together in the night, warns Peters. (Guests also report hearing dogs scampering about the house.)

And Peters and the inn have hosted roughy 50 wedding parties in honor of the Dame's love of weddings.

Even though she never married, the Dame filled one scrapbook with photos of brides, something Peters found while searching the attic.

And while researching the family tree, Peters was delighted to find Catharine's father was first cousin to a suspect in the 1922 Halls-Mills murder case in New Jersey. Oh, the juicy details! Peters shares them with the same pride as she does the inn's antique wallpaper: a married Episcopal rector, slaughtered with his choir-singer mistress, love letters ripped up between them, their heads shot, throats cut and the singer's tongue ripped out under a crab apple tree.

Peters has framed the old articles in the library detailing what was then the nation's most sensational murder trial and what historians see as an early example of a media circus.

Even a gently haunted house needs a murder to spice things up, and this one was a gem.

Peters believes the Carpender family moved to Wilmington, in part, to escape the notoriety, even though the cousin was acquitted. The Dame's parents purchased the home in 1947 from the Bergens.

As I toured and listened and marveled at all the care that has gone into this almost undisturbed example of a mid-20s Southern home, it became perfectly clear that Peters loves this house and the Dame who gave it its name.

"It's not haunted," Peters says. "It's *spirited*."

Which makes it the perfect match for Peters' second love: Halloween.

"You don't have to worry about what family you have to see," she says. "You can be dressed up as anything. It's always been my favorite holiday."

Last year was her sixth annual "All Hallow's Eve Ball" in which the entire Dames Inn is transformed into a playful haunted house, thanks to a massive collection of decorations stored in that dry basement. The Dame has suggested a break in the themed parties, so this Halloween there will be a tour on Friday, Oct. 28, and an invitation-only murder mystery dinner on Saturday.

What's next for the Dames Inn? A new roof, garden upgrades and other repairs to keep it worthy of the name. After all, the one thing the Dame won't tolerate — besides Scotch without ice — is having her home look like it's haunted.

Meet the Dame: Tours of the decorated Dames Inn, 1519 Princess St., are available on Friday, Oct. 28. Admission is $5. Reservations not required.

Mark Holmberg splits his time between Richmond, Virginia, and the Port City, writing and roaming, believing there's room for good ol' printed words about believers and strays and adventurers.

ALMANAC

October

By Ash Alder

"Corn and grain, corn and grain,
All that falls shall rise again."
– Harvest Chant

The Feast of Trumpets

Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on October 2. Also called the Feast of the Trumpets, this two-day Jewish New Year celebration includes the ritualistic sounding of the ancient shofar (ram's horn) and foods to evoke shana tova u'metukah — a good and sweet year. Since now is the time of the apple harvest, what sweeter way to celebrate than with a Red or Golden delicious, fresh from the tree? By dipping said fruit in honey, of course. Consider this tasty Jewish custom when your neighbor presents you with a basketful of local apples, but don't let it stop you from experimenting with cobblers and crisps, cinnamon-laced ciders, and in the spirit of Halloween, perhaps even shrunken apple heads. Granny Smiths work well for this – best if cored and peeled.

Using the tip of a pen, make indentions to guide your carvings. Cut hollows for the mouth and eyes, and carve away the apple flesh around the nose. Exaggerate the features. Your second apple will be better than the first, et cetera, but failed carvings spell homemade pie, so you might flub a few just for fun. Next, soak the carved apple heads in a mixture of lemon juice (1 cup) and salt (1 tablespoon) for a few minutes to help keep the fruit from molding. Pat dry. Now all that's left to do is wait. A food dehydrator is the fastest and easiest way to dry out – aka shrink – your apple head, but a warm, well-ventilated area should also work. Since the drying process can take over a week, you'll want to entertain yourself with other projects. In the spirit of carnival season, how about apple juggling?

Speaking of carving, did you know that the first jack-o'-lanterns weren't made out of pumpkins? Named for the Irish folktale of Stingy Jack – a man who twice fooled the devil yet unknowingly doomed his soul to roam the Earth until the end of time – the tradition of carving grotesque faces into turnips and potatoes to scare off evil spirits is centuries-old. According to legend, Jack's ghost carries a hollowed turnip aglow with an ember from the fires of Hell. Bet you can guess what happened when Irish immigrants came across their first pumpkin patch.

National Runner-up

Marigolds are the birth flower of October. Known as the 'herb of the sun', these vibrant yellow, red and orange flowers were carried as love charms in the Middle Ages. Although Victorian flower language experts believe them to be symbols of grief, many associate marigolds with optimism. Burpee president David Burpee must have been among them. In the late 1960s, the seed salesman launched a spirited campaign for marigolds to be named the national flower. We chose the rose.

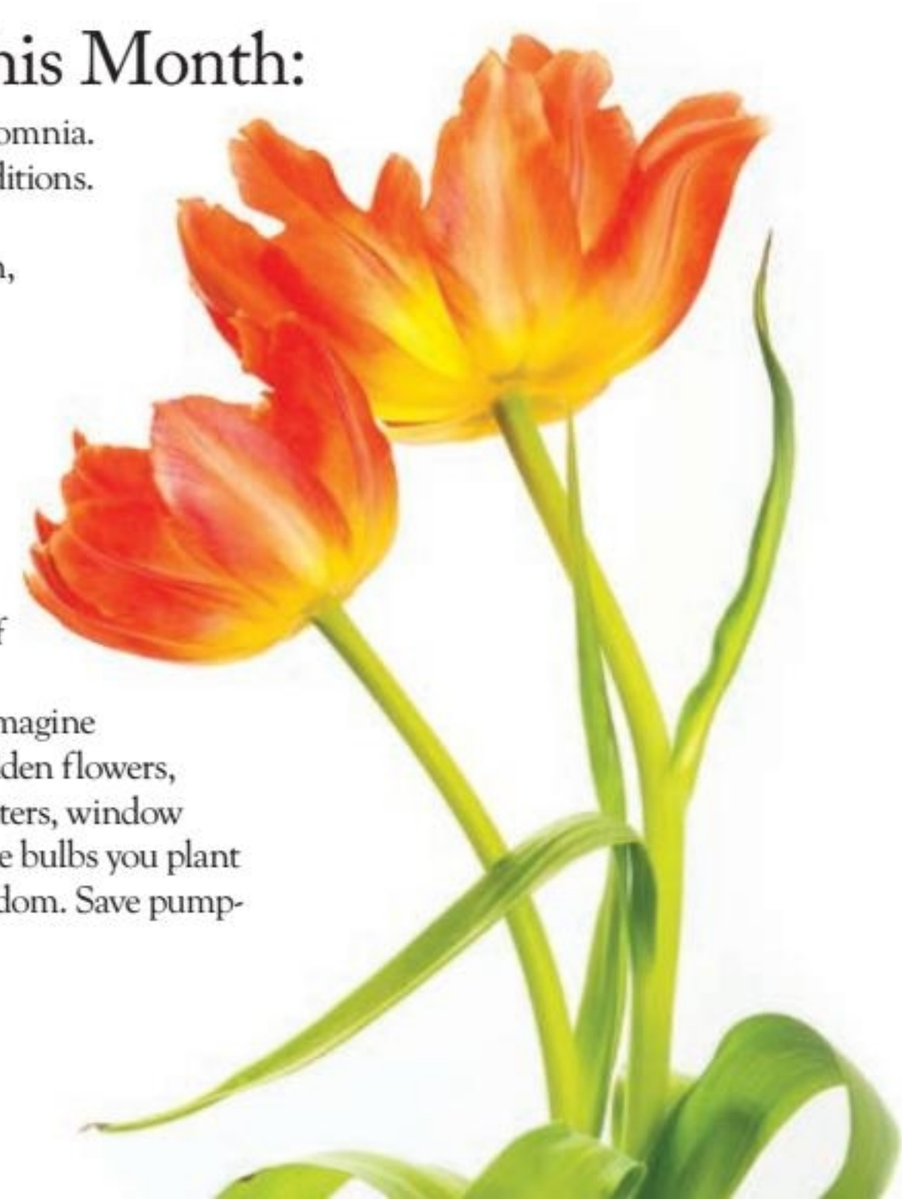
"Autumn is the hardest season. The leaves are all falling, and they're falling like they're falling in love with the ground."
– Andrea Gibson, poet

Herbs to Plant this Month:

Dill – Aids with digestion and insomnia.
Oregano – Used to treat skin conditions.
Sage – Increases recall ability.
Fennel – Improves kidneys, spleen, liver and lungs.

The Best Planting Time

Tulip and daffodil bulbs will color your spring garden brilliant if you plant them before the ground freezes. Allow yourself to dream. Imagine your home nestled in a grove of golden flowers, fringed blooms spilling out of planters, window boxes, busted rain boots. The more bulbs you plant the better – and plant them at random. Save pumpkin seeds to plant in spring.



Arts Calendar

Bark in the Park

10/1

Pablo Villegas in Concert

10/20

Screening of Birdman

10/27

10/1 Run for the Ta Tas
8 a.m. 5K "chaser race" that gives girls a head start. First participant to cross the finish line wins cash. Admission: $20–40. Proceeds benefit The Pink Ribbon Project, Pretty in Pink Foundation, and Love is Bald. Mayfaire Town Center, 925 Town Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/run-for-the-ta-tas.

10/1 Art in the Forest
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Fine Art Exhibition showcasing 27 of Brunswick Forest's talented artists' work including oil, acrylic, watercolor, sculpture, fabric, jewelry, wood, glass and photography. Meet and discuss the art with the artists and enjoy live music. Admission: Free. Brunswick Forest Fitness & Wellness Center, 2701 Brunswick Forest Parkway, Leland.

10/1 Fall King Challenge
Fall King Mackerel fishing competition where participants have their choice of three piers: Carolina Beach Pier, Kure Beach Pier and Johnny Mercers Pier. Info: (910) 538-0115 or southeasternkingmackerelclub.com.

10/1 Native Plant Sale
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Local growers will be out on the sidewalk with a variety of native plants for sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/1 Bark in the Park
10:30 a.m. Mighty mutts and playful purebreds are all welcome at the Skyhoundz Hyperflite Canine Championships. No experience necessary. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Park, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.towb.org.

10/2 Boogie in the Park
5–7 p.m. Where's Dave joins the summer concert series performing funk, rock and dance music. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

10/3 Word Weavers
7–9 p.m. A Christian writer's group that strives to mentor writers by offering critiques, workshops and retreats and keeping members informed about conferences and writing opportunities. Life Point Church, 3534 S College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 619-7344 or sondradron@bellsouth.net.

10/5 Kansas in Concert
5–7:30 p.m. Throwback rockers Kansas perform live. The band has earned eight gold albums, three sextuple-platinum albums and one platinum live album. Admission: $35–75. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com.

10/6 Owl Program & Native Plant Sale
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Learn about the different species of owls that can be seen in our region, and pick up tips in where you are most likely to spot them. Afterward, join the Native Plant Sale on the porch. Admission: Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 E Brown St., Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/6 Pink Ribbon Luncheon
11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Annual fundraiser/luncheon for The Pink Ribbon Project featuring guest speaker Kristin Armstrong who will discuss her book *Work in Progress: An Unfinished Woman's Guide to Grace*. Admission: $125. Proceeds benefit The Pink Ribbon Project. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-5002 or www.nhrmc.org.

10/6 Branford Marsalis Quartet
7:30 p.m. The Branford Marsalis Quartet perform live with Kurt Elling. The performance features Marsalis on saxophone, Joey Calderazzo on piano, Eric Revis on bass, and Justin Faulkner on drums. Admission: $25–75. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

10/6–9 Musical Theatre
7:30 p.m. Thalian Association presents the Tony-nominated musical *Rock of Ages*. The musical is a throwback to big rock bands with big egos playing big guitar solos under even bigger hair. Features songs by REO Speedwagon, Twisted Sister, Night Ranger and more. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

10/7 Farewell Summer Jazz Funeral
6 p.m. The Kure Beach Jazz Funeral mourns the passing of summer with a New Orleans style procession down the Boardwalk followed by a concert at Ocean Front Park by the Dixieland All Stars. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

10/7 Cocktail Party & Reception
7–11 p.m. Cocktail party featuring heavy hors d'oeuvres, open bar, live music by Spare Change and local celebrity Meg Caswell. Admission: $85. Proceeds benefit The Pink Ribbon Project. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 N Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-5002 or www.nhrmc.org.

10/7 Paula Poundstone Live
8 p.m. Comedian Paula Poundstone, recognized as one of Comedy Central's "100 Greatest Stand-Up of All Time" performs live. Admission: $28–50. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com.

10/7–9 Roast & Toast on the Coast
6 p.m. (Friday); 2:30 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. (Sunday). Three days of southern delicacies, craft beer and spirits, fine wine, open houses and live music. Admission: $12–170. Various location on Bald Head Island. Info: www.roasttoastcoast.com.

10/8 Fall Family Festival
9 a.m. –12 p.m. Seasonal activities for kids including pumpkin crafts, outdoor games and delicious fall treats. Admission: $9.75. Children's Museum of Wilmington, 116 Orange St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

10/8 Owl Program & Native Plant Sale
9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m. Learn about the different species of owls that can be seen in our region, and pick up tips in where you are most likely to spot them. Afterward, join the Native Plant Sale on the porch. Admission: Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/8 Fire in the Pines Festival
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Celebration of the importance of fire in the longleaf pine ecosystem with a controlled burn demo, environmental exhibitors, children's activities, hay rides, live music and food trucks. Admission: Free. Halyburton Park, 4099 S Seventeenth St., Wilmington. Info: www.fireinthepines.org.

10/8 Metropolitan Opera
12–5:15 p.m. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Conducted by Sir Simon Rattle in his first Live in HD performance, the production stars Nina Stemme and Australian heldentenor Stuart Skelton. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 S College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu.

10/8 Hidden Battleship
12–4:30 p.m. Behind-the-scenes tour of unrestored area of the battleship. The Azalea Coast Radio Club will be in Radio II to explain their work on the ship's radio transmitters. Admission: $45–50. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

10/8 Taste of Wrightsville Beach
5–8 p.m. Celebrate Wrightsville Beach's diverse and delicious fare with more than thirty food, wine and beer tasting booths, plus live music. Admission: $25–75. MarineMax, 130 Short St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 620-0281 or www.wrightsvillebeachfoundation.org.

10/8 Greenfield Lake Concert
6 p.m. Lettuce performs live with Empire Strikes Brass at Greenfield Lake. Admission: $22. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

10/8 & 9 Riverfest
9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual St. fair in downtown Wilmington featuring over 200 craft and food vendors, live music, car shows, SUP race, rowing regatta, children's activities, fireworks and more. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 452-6862 or www.wilmingtonriverfest.com.

10/8 & 9 Seafood, Blues & Jazz Festival
11 a.m. Annual festival featuring live jazz and blues performances on two stages, food and craft vendors, wine garden, kids zone and special headliners Johnny Lang and Samantha Fish. Admission: $25–60. Ft. Fisher Air Force Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureislandnc.org.

10/9 The Wood Brothers Live
6 p.m. Huka Entertainment and 98.3 The Penguin presents "masters of soulful folk" The Wood Brothers live at Brooklyn Arts Center. Admission: $22–32.50. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 N Fourth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

10/11 Over 50s Dance
7:30–10 p.m. Over 50s dance including ballroom, social and line dancing and live music by DJ Baby Boomer. Admission: $8. New Hanover County Senior Resource Center, 2222 S College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 620-8427 or www.overfiftiesdanceclub.org.

10/12 Airlie Gardens Bird Walk
8–9:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden staff and Airlie environmental educators for a relaxed bird walk through Airlie Gardens. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/12 & 13 The Capitol Steps
7:30 p.m. The Capitol Steps, America's most astute and hysterical collective of singing political satirists skewer every candidate who's possibly running for anything anywhere. Admission: $22–44. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

10/13 Cancer Survivor Spa Night
6–9 p.m. Spa night featuring complimentary spa services, refreshments and a gift basket drawing for breast and ovarian cancer survivors. Guests are encouraged to call ahead and schedule a manicure, half-hour massage or mini facial. Ki Spa Salon, 1125 Military Cutoff Road, Suite Q, Wilmington. Info: (910) 509-0410 or kispasalon.com.

10/13–16 ARTfall
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Juried art show and sale as part of the ARTblast Festival. Features original works by local artists. Reception and awards presentation on 10/15 from 2–4 p.m. Community Arts Center, 120 S Second St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

10/14 Newcomers Meeting
9:30 a.m. The North Brunswick Newcomers Club will hold a meet-and-greet with refreshments and guest speakers from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute as well as Jeremy Tomlinson from Port City Brew Bus. Admission: $25/year. Brunswick Community College, 2050 Enterprise Boulevard, Leland. Info: www.nbnewcomers.org.

10/14 Toast for Life
6–11 p.m. Black-tie fundraiser/celebration featuring a wine tasting/hors d'oeuvres pairing, cocktail reception, dinner, silent and live auctions, and after-party. Proceeds benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 N Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-3114 or www.facebook.com/MDAToasttoLifeGala.

10/14–16 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market filled with upcycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Admission: Free. 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway (Hwy 74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

10/14–16 Youth Theatre
7:30 p.m. Thalian Association Youth Theatre presents the classic musical Grease. Hannah Block Second St. Stage, 120 S Second St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

10/15 Cape Fear Heart Walk
8 a.m. Non-competitive 5K fundraising walk where roller skates, bicycles, strollers and dogs are welcome. Proceeds benefit the American Heart Association. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-9270 or www.capefearncheartwalk.org.

10/15 American Craft Walk
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Craft walk featuring juried artists along Front , Princess, Dock and Chestnut St. in downtown Wilmington encouraging people to stroll through retail and restaurant corridors. Includes traditional 3D art, dance, film, song and theater. Admission: Free. Princess St. & North Water St., Wilmington. Info: (732) 691-7834 or www.americancraftwalkwilmington.com.

10/15 Salty Paws Festival
11 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Pet-friendly festival featuring live entertainment, arts and crafts, food, music, pet contests, children's activities, raffles, prizes, and opportunities to adopt rescue animals. Admission: $7. Carolina Beach Lake Park, S Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-7233 or www.pleasureislandnc.org.

10/15 Back Door Kitchen Tour
11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Self-guided 11th anniversary tour featuring nine distinguished kitchens in historic downtown Wilmington. Admission: $20–30. Proceeds benefit residents of Old Wilmington. Various venues in downtown Wilmington. Info: (910) 398-3723 or www.rowilmington.org.

10/15 Native Plant Sale
2–4 p.m. Local grower Duane of My Garden Plants Company will be outside with a variety of native plants for sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 E Brown St., Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/15 YachtVenture
6–10 p.m. Enjoy dinner and cocktails, a silent auction, raffle, live music, and explore luxury yachts in a stunning waterfront setting. Admission: $100. Proceeds benefit the Children's Museum of Wilmington. MarineMax, 130 Short St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

10/15 & 16 Autumn with Topsail
7:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday); 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Sunday). Annual fall festival featuring arts and crafts booths, beer and wine garden, boat rides, children's activities, food court and live entertainment. Admission: $5–8. 720 Channel Boulevard, Topsail. Info: (910) 599-6214 or www.autumnwithtopsail.com.

10/15 & 16 NC Oyster Festival
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual festival featuring local seafood, live music, arts and crafts vendors, kids activities, oyster stew cook-off, oyster shucking and eating contests, and a shag competition. Admission: $5. 8 E Second St., Ocean Isle Beach. Info: (910) 754-6644 or ncoysterfestival.com.

10/16 Kayak Birding Trip
8:30–11:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden and Mahanaim Adventures for a morning of birding and kayaking at Holly Shelter. Admission: $45. Includes guide and kayak equipment. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/16 Boogie in the Park
5–7 p.m. The Midatlantic joins the summer concert series performing Americana, folk and bluegrass. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

10/16 Keb Mo
8 p.m. Three-time Grammy Award winner Keb Mo performs his unique slice-of-life blend of roots, rock and blues. Admission: $35–85. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com.

10/17 Golf & Games Day
10 a.m. Join the Good Shepherd Center for a day of golf, plus silent auction, bridge, mah-jongg and more. Dinner included. Admission: $100. Proceeds benefit the hungry and homeless. Cape Fear National Golf Course, 1281 Cape Fear National Drive, Leland. Info: (910) 763-4424 or www.goodshepardwilmington.org.

10/17 **Fall Harvest Tea**

11 a.m. & 2 p.m. Enjoy an old fashioned Fall harvest tea in the formal parlors of historic Bellamy Mansion. Admission: $37.45. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

10/19 **Southport Bird Walk**

8:30–9:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden staff for a bird walk around Southport's historic district and waterfront. Admission: Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 E Brown St., Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/19–26 **Restaurant Week**

Eight-day culinary celebration featuring dozens of restaurants throughout the Port City; prix fixe menus at special prices. No passes or coupons necessary. Info: (910) 791-0688 or www.encorerestaurantweek.com.

10/20 **Halloween is for the Birds!**

6:30 p.m. Halloween-themed party with food, drinks, live music, silent auction, and prizes for "Best Costume". Admission: $85. Proceeds benefit Skywatch Bird Rescue. 128 South Events & Catering, 128 S Front St., Wilmington. Info: (855) 407-3728 or 128southevents.com.

10/20 **Pablo Villegas**

7:30 p.m. The soul of the Spanish guitar, Pablo Villegas' singing and consummate technique conjure the passion, playfulness, and drama of his homeland's rich musical heritage. Admission: $22–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

10/21 **Rock For A Cure**

6 p.m. Fundraiser/concert hosted by the UNCW Communication Studies Society student organization featuring The Schoolboys, a silent auction and raffle. Proceeds benefit the Pink Ribbon Project. Reel Cafe, 100 S Front St., Wilmington. Info: (252) 373-3266 or uncw.edu/rockforacure.

10/21 **Airlie Oyster Roast**

6–10 p.m. Join Airlie Gardens for appetizers, steamed oysters, BBQ, fried chicken, cash bar and live music by The Band of Oz. Admission: $85. Proceeds support Airlie Gardens' Environmental Education Programs. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or airliegardens.org.

10/21 **Hubbard St. 2**

7:30 p.m. Hubbard St. 2 is a group of athletic and courageous young artists that feature new dances by ascendant choreographers in a diverse program of repertoire. Admission: $15–40. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

10/22 **Beach2Battleship Triathlon**

7:30 a.m. Internationally recognized full and half triathlon that includes a 2.4-mile (1.2-mile) swim across the Banks Channel, 112-mile (56-mile) ride through northern Wilmington and a 26.2-mile (13.1-mile) run to the battleship. Water St. & Princess St., Wilmington. Info: beach2battleship.com.

10/22 **Metropolitan Opera**

1–4:45 p.m. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Don Giovanni. Simon Keenlyside makes his Met role debut as the unrepentant seducer in Michael Grandages's staging of Mozart's masterpiece. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 S College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu.

10/22 **Native Plant Sale**

2–4 p.m. Local grower Duane Truscott of My Garden Plants Company will be outside with a variety of native plants for sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/22 **Charlie Daniels Band**

7:30 p.m. The legendary Charlie Daniels Band performs live at Thalian Hall in celebration of Charlie's 80th birthday. Born in Wilmington and raised among the longleaf pines in North Carolina, Charlie began his career playing bluegrass with the Misty Mountain Boys, and moved to gospel, southern rock and country. Admission: $79–99. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

10/22 **Symphony Orchestra**

7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra performs "Seasons and Serenades" including work by Piazzolla and Tchaikovsky and features Danijela Zezelj-Guladi on violin. Admission: $10–35. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

10/22 **All Hallows Masquerade**

8 p.m. Poplar Grove Plantation opens up its parlors for the Haint Blue All Hallows Masquerade in the Manor House courtyards. Includes oyster bar, cigar bar, open bar, black and white horror films, tarot readers and a costume contest. Admission: $50. Poplar Grove, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org/events.

10/22 & 23 **Seafood Festival**

11 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Saturday); 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Wilmington seafood festival featuring lots of fresh local seafood, live music, cooking demonstrations and vendors on the banks

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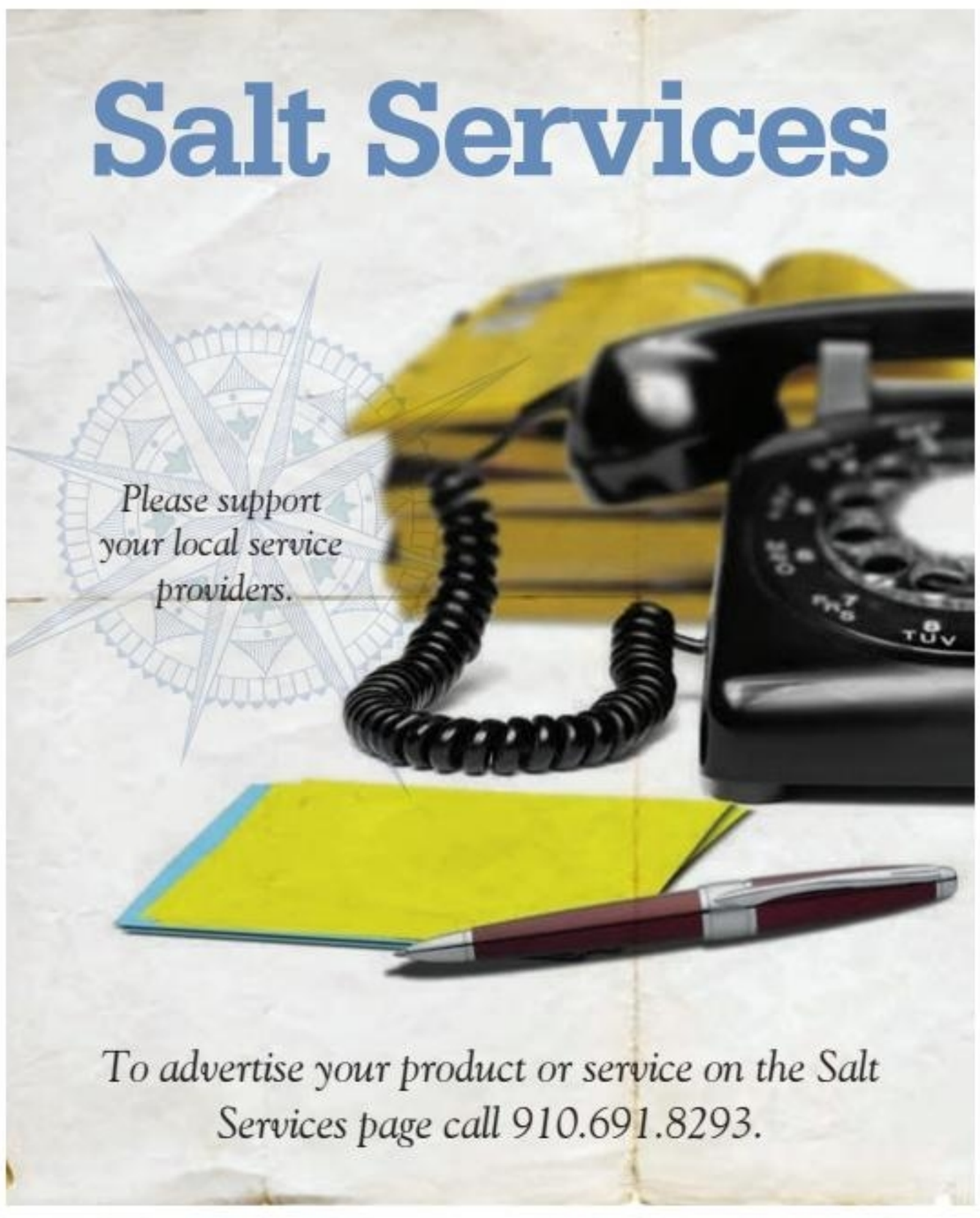
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of the Cape Fear River. Admission: Free. Watermark Marina, 4114 River Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-5259 or www.eventsatwatermark.com/wilmington-seafood-festival.

10/25 Batty's Halloween Bash

5:30–8 p.m. Trick-or-treat aboard the Battleship NC and enjoy carnival festivities, bounce houses, petting zoo and treats. Costumes encouraged. Admission: $5. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

10/26 Page to Stage

6:30 p.m. Writers, actors and producers share original works of comedy and drama with the community and encourage feedback every fourth Wednesday. Admission: Free, donations appreciated. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 S Seventeenth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

10/27 Plant Program & Native Plant Sale

9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Free program about the native trees and plants of southeastern NC and how they benefit our local birds and wildlife. Learn how to create a native habitat for the birds, butterflies and bees in your yard and pick up some wildlife-friendly plants at the Native Plant Sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 E Brown St., Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/27 Trick-or-Treat Under the Sea

5–8 p.m. Family-friendly Halloween event featuring indoor trick-or-treating, storytelling, magic show, spooky scuba divers, face painting, animal encounters and local merchants. NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, 900 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 772-0500 or www.ncaquariums.com.

10/27 Birdman

7:30 p.m. Screening of the 2015 Academy Award winner for "Best Picture," Birdman accompanied live by renowned jazz drummer Antonio Sanchez performing the movie's score Admission: $15–40. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

10/27 Dave Bennett

7:30 p.m. Roots of Pop "Swing to Rock." Multi-instrument phenomenon, Dave Bennett covers music from the swing era to early rockabilly and country. BCC Odell Williamson Auditorium, 150 College Road, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

10/28 Fourth Friday

6–9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

10/28 Diverse Works

6–9 p.m. Art opening at Acme Arts Studio by the group Diverse Works: Katherine Webb, MJ Cunningham, Peggy Vineyard, Justine Ferreri, Chris Farley, Anne Sinclair and Kate Sinclair. A variety of media both 2D and 3D will be on display through Nov 18. 711 N 5th Ave.

10/28 & 29 Hells Belles Haunted House

7–11 p.m. (Friday); 6–11 p.m. (Saturday). First Annual Hells Belles and Colonial Damned Haunted House featuring beer and food from local food trucks. Recommended for ages 12 and older. Admission: $25. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

10/28–30 Landfall Golf Tournament

8 a.m. The Landfall Tradition Collegiate Golf Tournament features an eighteen-team field from eleven states and nine conferences; includes five of the top twenty ranked teams. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-2348 or www.landfalltradition.com.

10/29 Plant Program & Native Plant Sale

9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m. Free program about the native trees and plants of southeastern NC and how they benefit our local birds and other wildlife. Learn how to create a native habitat for the birds, butterflies and bees in your yard, and pick up some wildlife-friendly plants at the Native Plant Sale. 10% of all sales will be donated to the Cape Fear Audubon Society's new Native Habitat Certification Program. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

10/29 Beer & Wine Festival

1–5 p.m. The Lighthouse Beer & Wine Festival features over 150 craft breweries and wineries with over 300 samplings, live music, food trucks, vendors and more. Admission: $15–40. Lighthouse Beer & Wine, 220 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8622 or www.lighthousebeerandwine.com.

10/28 – 11/6 Cape Fear Fair & Expo

5–11 p.m. (Monday–Thursday); 5 p.m. – 12 a.m. (Friday); 12 p.m. – 12 a.m. (Saturday); 1–11 p.m. (Sunday). Live entertainment and family fun plus carnival rides, games, shows, livestock exhibits, commercial booths, agricultural tents, judged competitions, delicious food and more. Admission: $22. Wilmington International Airport, 1740 Airport Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 313-1234 or www.capefearfair.com.

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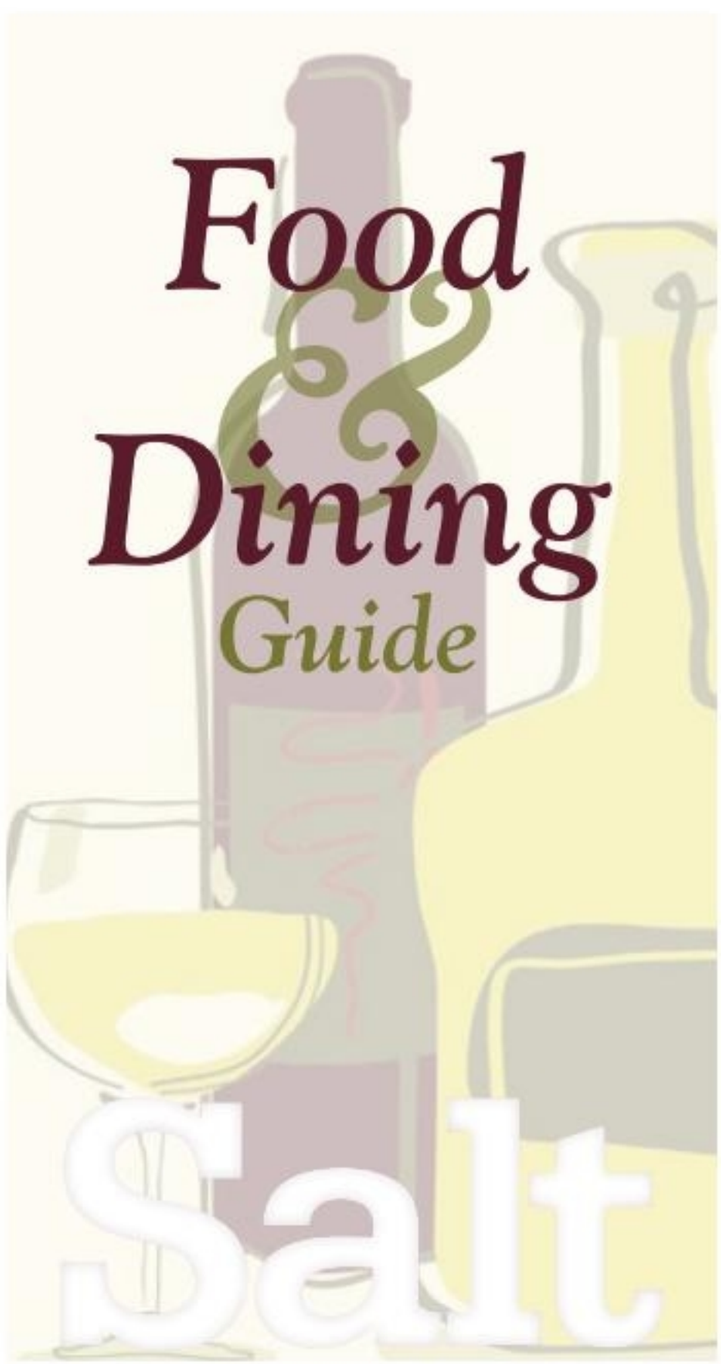

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Transplanted Garden
Two Sisters Bookery
Thrill of the Hunt
Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
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Wrightsville Beach Museum

10/29 — **Gourmet For A Cause**

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Gourmet sale hosted by the Ministering Circle featuring baked goods, pickles, jams, ham biscuits, frozen foods and unique raffle items. Proceeds support local health care programs. Elks Lodge, 5102 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 231-3667 or kwarren51@hotmail.com.

10/29 — **Haunted Library**

2–5 p.m. Storytelling festival for kids featuring spooky activities, scary tales, a story walk and witching hour. Admission: Free. NHC Main Library, 201 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6301 or www.nhclibrary.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday – Wednesday — **Cinematique Films**

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday — **Wine Tasting**

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday — **Cape Fear Blues Jam**

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday — **T'ai Chi at CAM**

12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S Seventeenth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday — **Wednesday Echo**

7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 E Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Thursday — **Yoga at the CAM**

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S Seventeenth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday — **Dinner Theatre**

7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Greater Tuna, the hilarious send-up of small town morals and mores. Two actors play all twenty of the hilarious citizens of Tuna, Texas' third smallest town. Ends 10/8. Admission: $17–37. TheatreNOW, 19 S Tenth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or theatrewilmington.com.

Fridays – Sundays — **Hubb's Corn Maze**

6–11 p.m. (Fridays); 1–11 p.m. (Saturdays); 1–6 p.m. (Sunday). Eastern North Carolina's largest fall festival and corn maze featuring a pumpkin field, slides, sand pit, hayrides, laser tag, fire pits, food and more. Runs through 11/12. Hubb's Farm, 10444 US Hwy 421 N, Clinton. Info: (910) 564-6709 or www.hubbscornmaze.com.

Saturday — **Riverfront Farmers' Market**

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, N Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Sunday — **Bluewater Waterfront Music**

4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. 10/2: Port City Shakedown; 10/9: Southern Trouble; 10/16: Machine Gun. Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

Sunday — **Grooves in the Grove**

5–7 p.m. Fall concert series held on the lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation. 10/4: Mojo Collins & Band; 10/11: Folkstone String Band; 10/18: Massive Grass; 10/25: TBD. Admission: $5. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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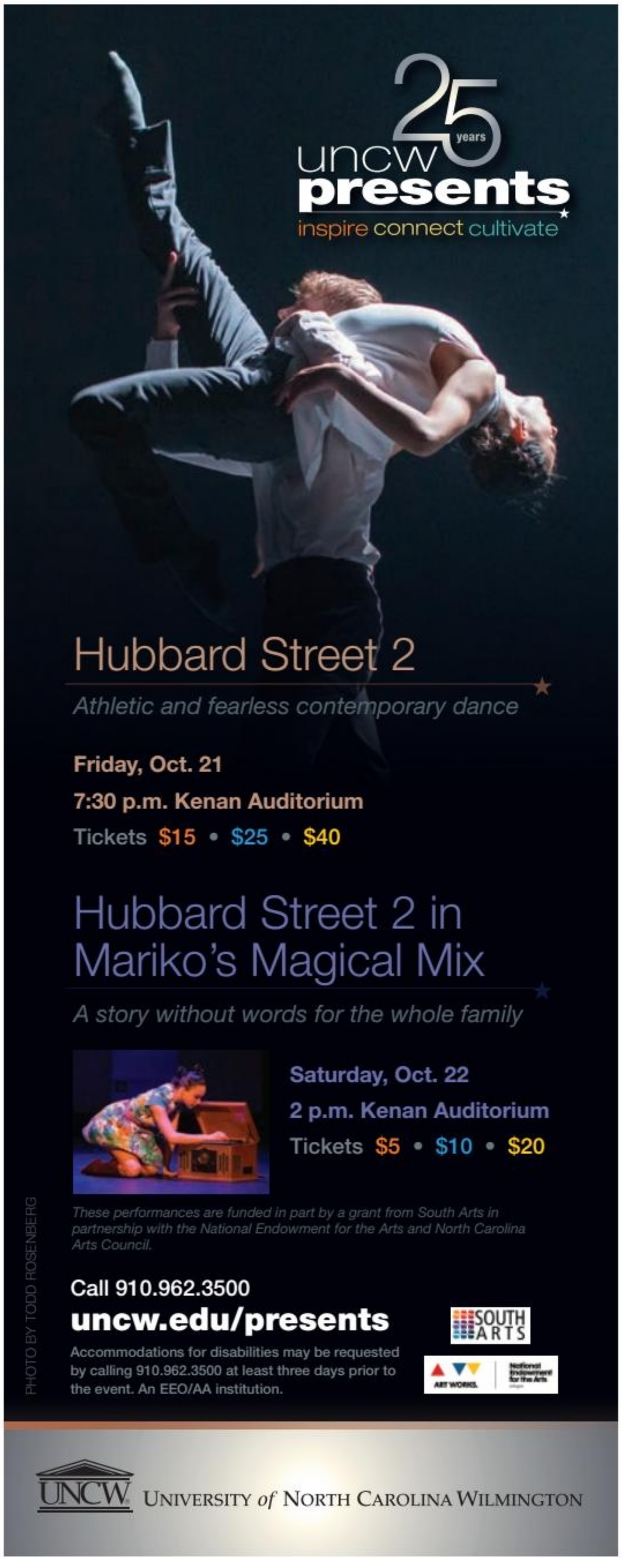
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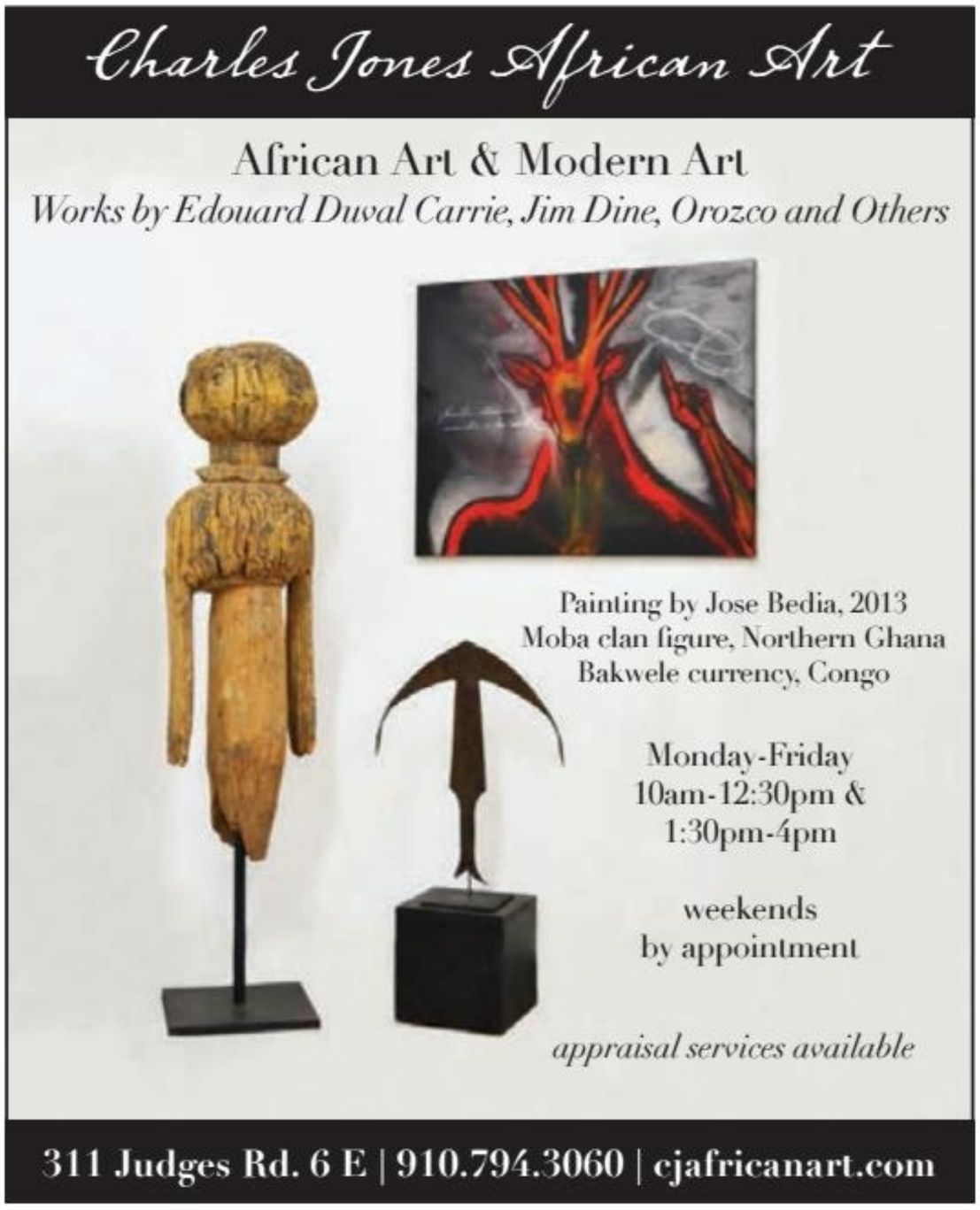
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Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Drew & Elise Massey

Delane Baker, Robby & Brittany Justice

Anne-Christian, Drew Wroblewski

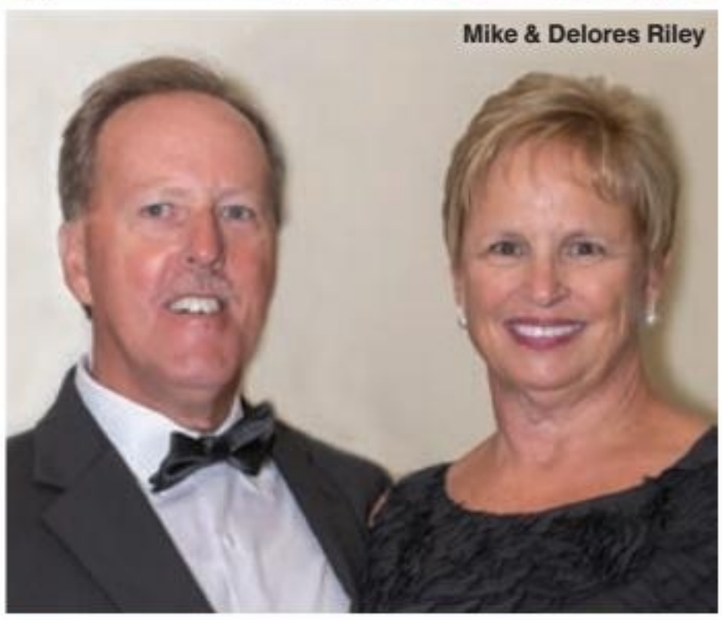
Carl & Amy Biber

Cheryl & Bobby Collins, Janice Adams

Jack & Nancy McCann

Brenda Hessenius, Jay Searajay

Sharon Moore, Jeff Battle


Mike & Delores Riley

Mackenzie Coner, Fabrizio Parvella

Ron & Penny Millis

Mose & Josie Highsmith

Port City People

The 17th Annual Landfall Foundation Art Show

Juried Awards and Preview Party

Wednesday, August 24, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Angela Koneski, Dr. Lenard Edralin, Jennifer Ha

Mark Taylor

Jessica Schreiber, Carl Roark, Kristen Harmon

Fran Drury, Jessica Spencer, Carol Drury

Jonathan Haug

Leping Beck, Heather Gordy, Ritsuko Stilson

Martha Edgerton, Lisa Lightfoot, Gay & John Marinelli

Elena Wright

Jim Bettendorf, William Hubbard

Robert Royce, Marilyn Gunther, Bill Hamlet

Mike & Allie Bryand

Chad Pearson, Dosis & Alex Smith

Port City People

Last Chance for White Pants Gala

Benefit for Lower Cape Fear Hospice's services and programs

Saturday, August 27, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Zach & Meghan Lucas

Sharon Laney, April Swafford, David Owens, Myra Webb, Angie Ball

Denise & Matt Lopatky

Don & Connie Jordan

Aaron & Karen Frye, Andrea & Chad Corbin

Tim & Kristie Pirkey

Lorraine Sieminski, Michelle Hoadley

Amy & Craig Brady, Michelle Clark, Buddy Green

Josh & Shelley Whitcomb

Don & Sandy Spiers, Lisa Weeks, Jay Cole

Bryan & Kelly Thomas

Matt & Lauren Page

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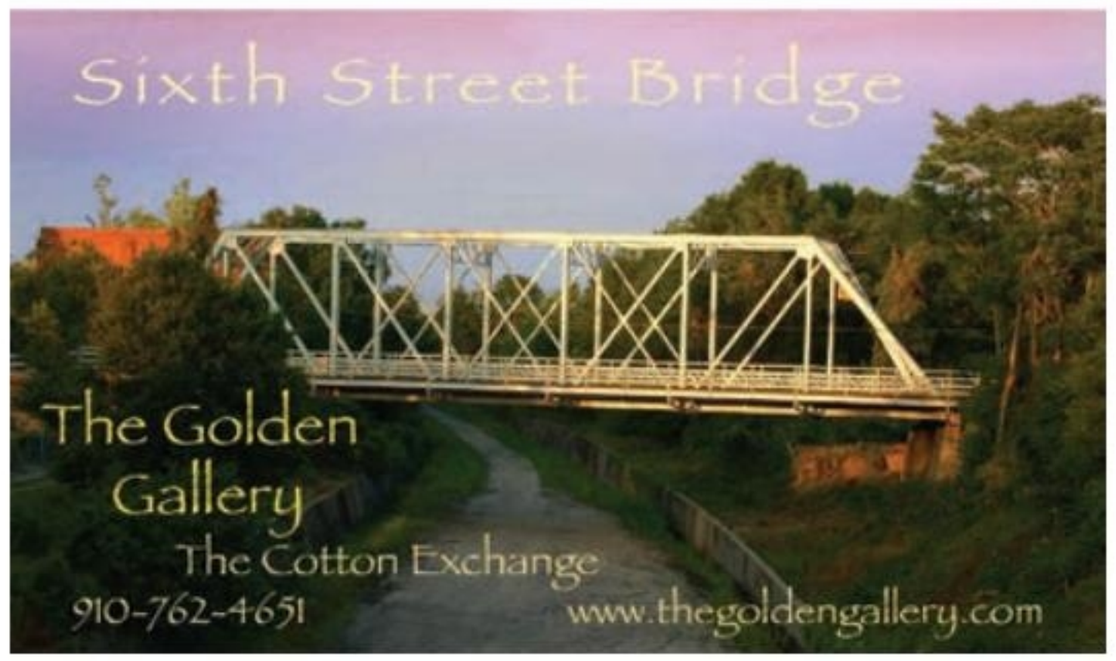

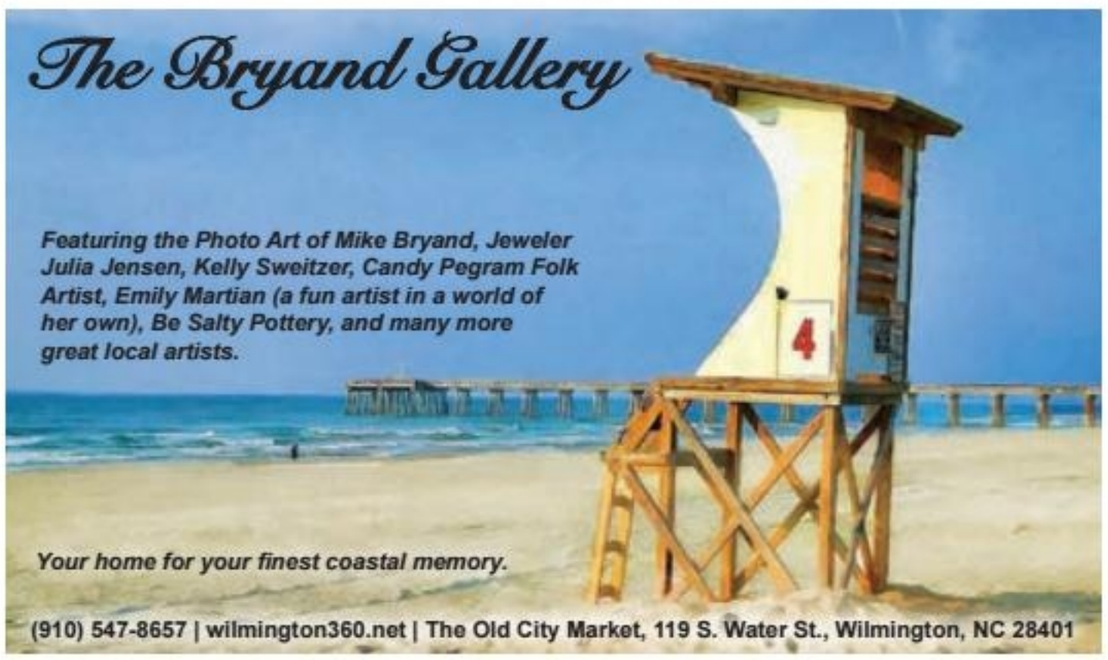
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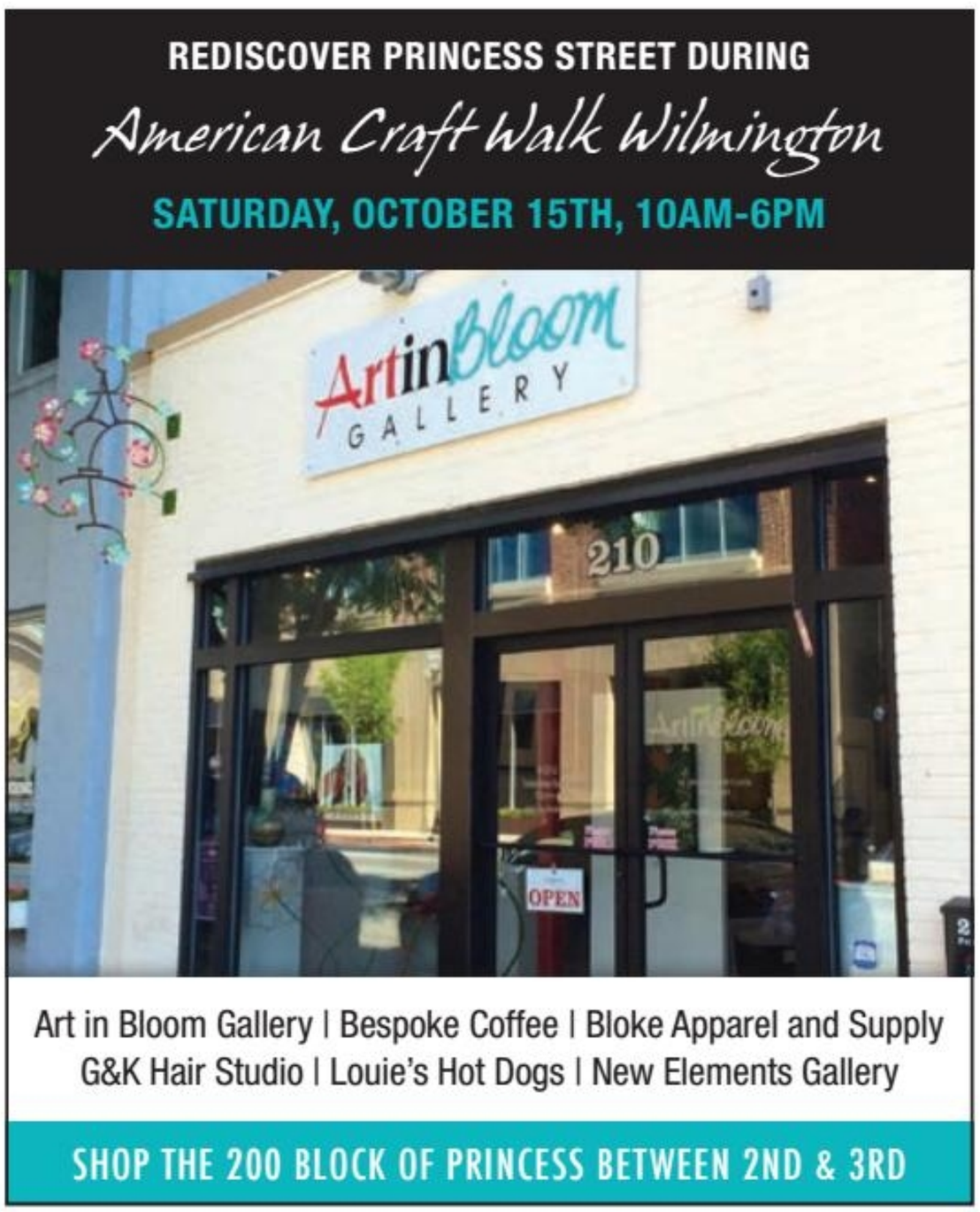
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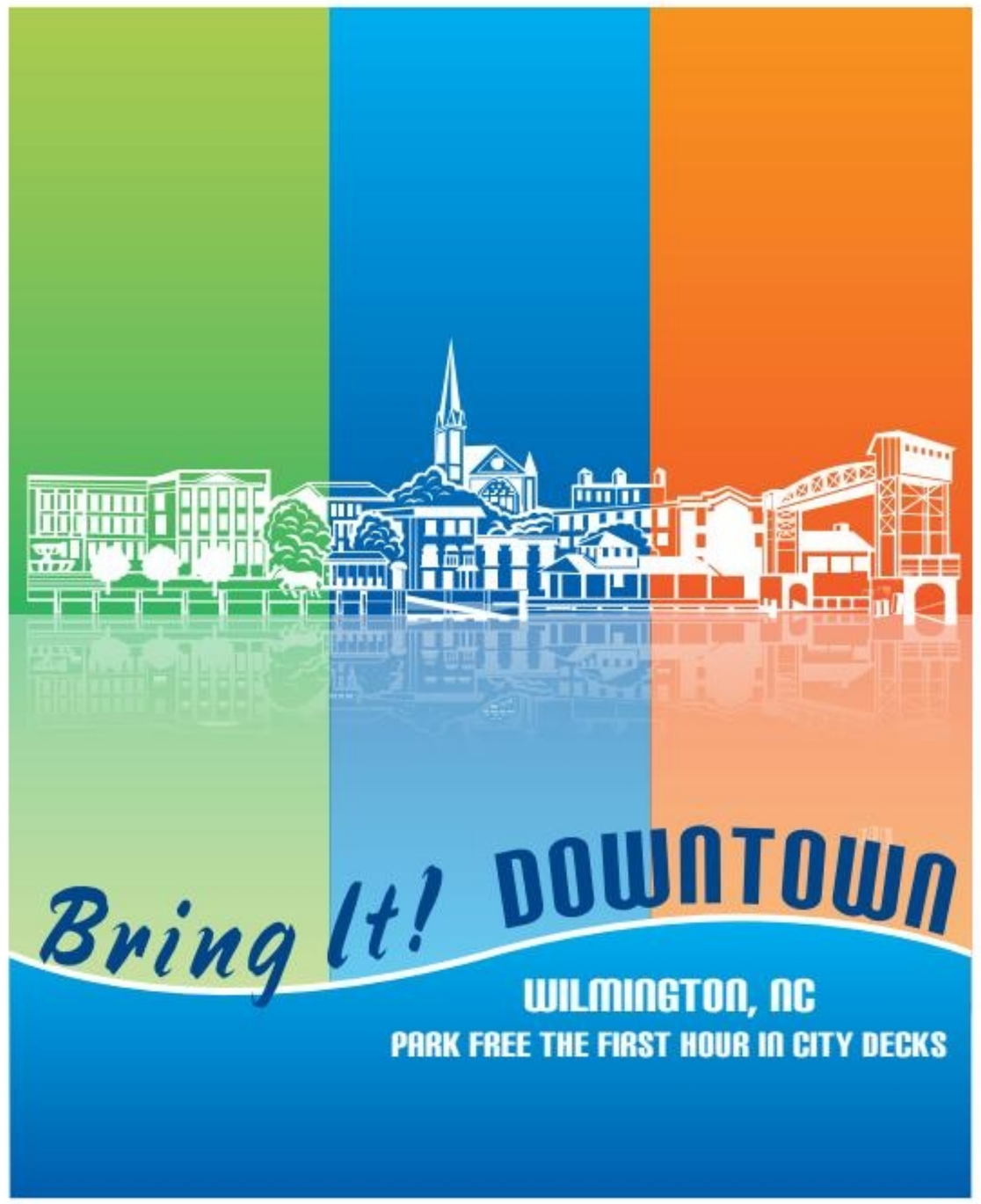

Laid-back Libra

Don't let October become "Rocktober" under the sign of the scales

By Astrid Stellanova

There just ain't no pigeon-holing a Libran. Bridgette Bardot is a Libran. So is Simon Cowell, Julie Andrews. Sting. And Jesse Jackson. The Libran likes the better things in life, likes taking to a public stage, likes being given lots of room to develop their fine talents, but doesn't much care for grunt work. The Librans I know also don't like for people around them to kick up a lot of dust and make a fuss. Ad Astra — Astrid

Libra (September 23–October 22)
You got a hand stuck out, being friendly, wanting to make nice with someone who has tested your last nerve — and they think you stuck your hand out for a gimme. They don't have the class you do, my well-balanced friend, so the first order of business is to keep your hand to yourself and enjoy the jingling of all that silver that is filling your pocket. You have got a lot of prosperity in the stars waiting for you this year. And you also have more friends than a body could ever need, so square your shoulders and go enjoy a big ole slice of birthday cake.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
There was a time when keeping secrets worked for you. This, however, is not that time. You need a strong shoulder to cry on, and given your natural magnetism, plenty will offer one. The pleasure of a kind word can go further than the deep pleasure you take from maintaining personal mystery—so purge, Honey, and let somebody be a good pal to you.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
A big idea you incubated some time ago is ripe and ready. Don't hesitate to share it and find the support and dollars you need. Also, this is a good time to look at all your investments (I call this rooting and hunting under the sofa cushions) and see how much you have on hand to back yourself. Your idea is a good one; you weren't crazy when you claimed you are *this close* to Making Good, as Grandpa Hornblower says.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Summer was discombobulating for you, wasn't it Sugar? And the fall is looking a little dicey. But cheer up; you are just going to love the year end. But first, there are two matters that need to be addressed before you have the personal freedom to move on from something that keeps tripping you up. Darling, they are not going away without you putting down the Fritos bag (and getting up off the sofa) in order to show these two matters the door.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Whaa-whaa-whaa . . . That, whaa-whaa sound, Honey Child, is your disillusionment when the happy went right out of your red balloon. You have been killing yourself trying to make someone you ~~care for~~ care for you in the same way. There is nothing more you can do. This person is not as giving, generous, nor nearly as much fun as you are. And they are never going to be as demonstrative. You got invested, for sure, but do you love them?

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
There, there, there. Feel better? Did you take to your bed after Sugar Booger left your heart busted into two big pieces? Well, nobody would have blamed you one bit if you had. They seem to have a contractual obligation to darken your world while you are playing Mary Poppins and trying for sweetness and light. Sweet Thing, shake it off and look for a different type.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
You are about two Alka-Seltzers away from driving your friends and families crazy as a bat in the basement. It is true that you can be entertaining and the life of the party, but right now everybody who knows you wishes you could spend at least one day a week boring the crap out of them. Quiet is not a four-letter word. It's five, Darling.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Someone close to you is convinced you are having a breakthrough just at the very time you feel you are having a breakdown. The other person is right. You have developed a creative genius for seeing a new way to approach a very old problem. It could bring you closer to a dream if you don't back away. See it through.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
A mysterious person — somebody you've known for some time but never well — has a connection to you that will soon become clear. This will require you to be open, gentle, pliant and honest in order to enjoy the full benefit of a special revelation. Honey, I know that's a tall order, but for your own sake, *try*.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Thankfully, you took old Astrid's advice about last month and stopped borrowing money and began making your own. Now, Sugar, I want you to stop thinking you can borrow time. This ain't a dress rehearsal — it's your life you have been blowing like you were on the easy credit life extension plan. Do. Not. Waste. One. More. Second. You aren't about to die but you also won't get endless chances to take care of business.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
You've had a funny feeling about a loved one that actually is your deepest intuition talking to you. Trust it. Rely upon it. You have considerable intuitive abilities that have been building since early adulthood. This is not lottery winning-type information, and doesn't require a Ouija board, but it sure is about expanding your world, happiness and friendships with others. That, Dearie, is the real jackpot.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Something started for you last month that you might not secretly trust but that you should. It was an unusual gift — and you were deeply puzzled at first. This gift is going to change you, change your life and even change your mind about who you are. Honey, it is going to be a crazy ride for you but there is no question it is your destiny to follow the Yellow Brick Road. Get hopping.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Party Line

Telephones have come a long way – even if our politics and sense of civility haven't

By Clyde Edgerton

A red rotary phone recently ended up in our house. It had been used in an elementary school talent show. Some of you remember the pre-push button, dial telephone once in many homes. The phone itself, about the size of a brick, but a little taller, usually sat on a table or shelf and was plugged into the wall via a cord. My 13-year-old son wondered if people used to walk around holding them when they talked — receiver in one hand, phone in the other. I said that early on the cord wasn't long enough and then later very long cords became fashionable and people could walk around with them if they liked. A phone was about the weight of a laptop, but with significantly fewer functions.

For younger folks: On the front of the phone is a round disc — about the size of a CD (remember those?) with 10 holes in a circle — counting counter-clockwise. Inside each hole is a number, 1 – 9, and then the final number, 0.

A phone number is dialed, one number at a time, by sticking your finger into the correct hole on the dial and pulling around one number at a time until it reaches a little metal stop. The 1 is nearest the stop. Our number in Durham County, North Carolina, when I was a child, was 6-4558.

As I write, I realize that perhaps the 0 should have preceded the 1 rather than follow the 9. That's off-topic, though.

But to continue off-topic: Back then when you called the operator to say the number of — and ask her to place — a long distance call, you had to dial 0 to get the operator — meaning the dial had to be cranked from the 0 spot all the way around to the stop and then released. The 0 took longer to finish dialing than any other number. An enormous amount of time was wasted over several decades while people waited for the 0 to finish dialing.

Sorry, I just did the math: Every billion long distance calls collectively wasted about 30 years.

The phone had a receiver which rested atop the phone. The receiver, about the size of a banana (actually a sender/receiver because you talked into one end and listened from the other), while resting on the phone, pressed down two buttons which did not work independently. When you pressed one button, they both went down. When you lifted the receiver from its cradle, the buttons came up together and the line was open for you to make a call. There was a dial tone that I'm sure I can't describe to one who's not heard it. To one who has: You are probably hearing it in your head now.

While explaining things to my son, I remembered this:

In the early 1950s, our phone was on a party line, shared with seven or eight households, not a private line; and there was a skillful way to secretly listen in on neighbors' phone conversations. I probably learned the technique from watching my mother, though I can't be sure.

Usually, if you were talking along and somebody on your party line lifted their receiver off their phone, you would hear a click and then you could hear breathing or whatever was going on in their house, and then they'd hang up since the line was in use. If they continued listening, you could say, "Sorry, I'm using the line."

But if you wanted to listen in on another conversation, you lifted only one end of the receiver and pressed the exposed button (so that both buttons stayed down), and then kept holding them down as you lifted the receiver to your ear. Next, you slowly lifted the button that was depressed, stopping just before the click. Then you heard the talkers, but they couldn't tell you were listening in. If you lifted that button too high, a click would sound and your presence would be known. Of course, you couldn't do something like this in our day and age as you might get banned from the county park system or the courthouse or county school grounds by vigilant officials.

Thinking back on all this led me to what may be a naive realization:

Let's assume we are in the 1950s and that today's political climate exists: many people despising fellow citizens because of "political beliefs."

Let's assume further that because of your new neighbor's bumper sticker, you've never spoken to her/him. But, you happen to overhear a phone conversation that neighbor is having with a friend on a neighborhood party line.

You hear no political talk, but you learn that your neighbor likes dark roast coffee like you do. I mean, really likes it. His mother has dementia, like your mother. He likes Dr. John's music, like you do.

When you next see that neighbor in person, the chance for friendship is greater than before. The possibility of being civil, of seeing beyond the spirit of bumper-sticker-like cable news, of showing some Southern hospitality — is not so far-flung.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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